EASTERN BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.

DINAJPUR.

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DINAJPUR

BY

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PREFACE.

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The 20*th March* 1911.

F. W. STRONG.

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GAZETTEER

OF THE

DINAJPUR DISTRICT.

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

THE district of Dinājpur lies between 24° 55′ and 26° 23′ north latitude, and 88° 2′ and 89° 19′ east longitude, in the Rājshāhi Commissionership of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The area of the district is 3,946 square miles, its greatest length from north to south being 105 miles, and its greatest breadth near its southern end between the Karatoyā and the Mahānanda rivers being 76 miles. Its population at the census of 1911 was 1,687,863 souls. The chief town, from which the district takes its name, is situated about the centre of the district, on the left bank of the Punarbhabā river, in 25° 38′ north latitude, and 88° 40′46″ east longitude. GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

According to Buchanan Hamilton, Dinājpur is said to signify the abode of beggars and is identical with Dinwāj, a Rājā of which, Gonesh, usurped the Government of Gaur. The name appears originally to have applied more particularly to the locality in which the present Rājbāri is situated, and a possible explanation of it may be that some forgotten prince, Dināj or Dinwāj, was the original founder of the Dinājpur family, and gave his name to the site. In Rennell's Description of the Roads of Bengal and Behar, published in 1778, it is given the alternative name of Rājganj. This name still survives in one of the wards of the town. Origin of name.

The district is bounded on the north-east by Jalpāiguri; on the north-west and west by Purneā; on the east by Rangpur; on the south-east by Bogrā; on the south by Rājshāhi; and on the south-west by Māldā. The Nāgar river forms its natural boundary on the Purneā side, while the Karatoyā separates it from Rangpur for about 50 miles on the south-east. Boundaries.

The general appearance of the country is flat, sloping gently southwards, as is shown by the trend of the rivers. In the south and portions of the west of the district the curious formation known as the Bārind, geologically classed as old alluvium, makes its appearance. The characteristic of this is an undulating country General configuration.

interspersed with ravines. The elevations are nowhere worthy of the name of hills, the highest ridge not exceeding 100 feet, but they make nevertheless a considerable alteration in the appearance of the country, which elsewhere consists of the flat alluvial plain characteristic of the Gangetic delta. The ravines vary from shallow stretches of low land, suitable for growing rice, to deeper depressions bearing a resemblance to old river-beds and sometimes containing water. These latter are locally called Khāris. The ridges are commonly covered with scrub jungle and stunted trees.

Another marked feature of the district are the tanks, especially numerous in the south, where wells are comparatively little used. These vary in size from splendid stretches of water, which might justly be called lakes or meres, to small and insignificant ponds. The vast number of these has given rise to the supposition that at some former time the country was more populous than it is now. This is probably correct, but at the same time the desire of the well-to-do Bengali to perpetuate his memory and propitiate the Deity by digging a new tank, and his corresponding disinclination to re-excavate an old one, may have something to do with it. Most of these tanks have fallen into neglect and are overgrown with reeds, lotus, and other aquatic plants.

Old writers make mention of the large number of marshes or *bils*, formed by the overflowing of the rivers, to be found in the district. It is possible that since those days the face of the country has gradually undergone a change, as nowadays it would be impossible to speak of such marshes as a feature of the scenery. They do indeed exist, and in the rains some of them are of considerable extent, but their number is small compared with the size of the district.

Natural divisions.

In the absence of hills it is hard to trace natural divisions, but there are many points of difference between the north and the south of the district. The former is broken up with patches of tree jungle and clumps of bamboos; the cultivated areas are smaller in size, and the villages consist of scattered homesteads embowered in luxuriant vegetation. To the south the country is more open; clumps of trees are comparatively scarce; the villages are often clusters of houses situated on bare ridges or on open river banks, and the prevailing toddy and date-palms give a peculiarly oriental character to the scenery.

RIVER SYSTEM.

The general direction of the main rivers is without exception from north to south, and the ultimate destination of all is the Ganges. Their beds are as a rule well below the level of the surrounding country, and it is only in exceptionally wet years that they overflow their banks to any great extent. Widespread inundations, such as are of annual occurrence in the districts of the Dacca division, are almost unknown in modern times, though they appear to have been common enough a century or so

ago. In the rainy season the main rivers, such as the Nāgar, Punarbhabā, and Atrāi, are navigable by good-sized country boats to about as far north as Dinājpur town, or a little above it, but in the dry season, or for some eight months in the year, the points up to which they are navigable by large boats are very much lower down, and most of them are fordable almost throughout their entire course through the district. There is good reason to suppose that the main rivers are gradually becoming shallower through silting up. The immediate cause of this is the sluggishness of their currents throughout the greater part of the year. The river channels are well marked and fairly constant, though there is evidence that in the past this was not always so, and that changes of course occasionally took place. Into the main rivers flow many small streams or *khāls*. These are navigable by small boats in the rains, but throughout the greater part of the year they are either dry, or dwindle to a succession of pools. Generally speaking the rivers and streams are of little use for purposes of communication, and even in the height of the rainy season travelling is done by bullock cart.

The following is a brief account of the principal rivers, proceeding from west to east:—

The Nāgar takes its rise at a place just north of the Ātwāri outpost, where the districts of Dinājpur, Purneā, and Jalpāiguri meet. It takes a south-westerly course, and forms the boundary between the Purneā and Dinājpur districts until it joins the Mahānanda, a distance of nearly 90 miles. Its bed is rocky in the upper reaches, but becomes sandy lower down. The lower portion of its channel is deeper than those of most of the other rivers in the district, and is hardly fordable even in the dry weather. There are no places of any great importance on its banks, except the police outpost of Ātwāri, and the small mart of Jagadal near the main road to Kishenganj in the Purneā district. Shortly after its junction with the Nāgar the Mahānanda throws out a side branch, which, entering the district, follows a winding course never far removed from the Mahānanda, and finally joins the latter about 12 miles lower down. This channel is called the Nāgar and is generally unfordable throughout the year. It is joined by the Gamar river near Itāhār. The principal tributary of the Nāgar is the Kulik, which rises in a marsh about six miles west of the head-quarters of the Thākurgāon subdivision, and after running through the thānās of Rānisankil, Hemtābād and Rāiganj, falls into the Nāgar, a short distance above the junction of the latter with the Mahānanda. Near its southern extremity it passes the important trading centre of Rāiganj, the principal jute mart in the district.

Nāgar.

Smaller tributaries of the Nāgar are the Tirnāi, the Nunā and the Kāyeh, the first of which passes close to the Bāliyādangi police station and joins the Nāgar about 26 miles from its source while the latter two enter it lower down.

Mahānanda. The Mahānanda, after flowing through Purneā, is joined by the Nāgar at a place on the Dinājpur boundary in the jurisdiction of the Itāhār police outpost. From there it forms the boundary between Dinājpur and Māldā for about 20 miles. The large and important village of Churāman, the home of one of the principal zamindārs, is situated on its eastern bank.

Chhirāmati. The Chhirāmati takes its rise in a marsh on the common boundary of the Pirganj and Kāliyāganj thānās, and after passing close to the Kāliyāganj police station, and forming the boundary between the Kāliyāganj thānā and the Itāhār outpost on the one side, and the Bansihāri thānā on the other, flows into the Māldā district after a course of some 30 miles. It is a sluggish stream of little importance, with no tributaries. The village of Patirāj, the most important market in the south-western part of the district, is situated on its right bank.

Tāngan. The Tāngan enters the district on its northern boundary from Jalpāiguri, and after passing through the thānās of Thākurgāon, Pirganj, Kāliyāganj and Bansihāri, and skirting that of Gangārāmpur, passes into the Māldā district, where it joins the Mahānanda. Its entire course in Dinājpur district is about 80 miles. The channel of this river is rather narrow, with steep banks, and is sandy in its upper reaches. In the rains fair-sized country boats can come up almost as far as the headquarters of the Thākurgāon subdivision, which is situated on its left bank. Besides Thākurgāon, Shihole and Bansihāri are the only places of any importance situated on its banks. The former is the centre of a weekly market of some note, while the latter is only noteworthy as being the site of the local police station. This river is connected, about the centre of the Thākurgāon subdivision, with the Punarbhabā by a rather interesting canal called the Rāmdānrā, said to have been constructed by Rājā Rāmnāth of Dinājpur as a means of communication between two of his country seats, Gobindnagar and Prānnagar.

The principal tributaries of the Tāngan are the Ghorāmārā, a small streamlet rising near Ruhiyā, and joining the Tāngan at Mandalpārā, a few miles below Thākurgāon, and the Tulāi, which, rising in the jurisdiction of Pirganj, and passing through the small mart of Birol, joins the Tāngan in Bansihāri thānā.

Punarbhabā. The Punarbhabā rises from a marsh called Brahmanpukhur in the Thākurgāon thānā, and after passing through Birganj thānā and entering the Kotwāli thānā is joined by the Dhepā, a mile or two above the town of Dinājpur. Notwithstanding the fact that the Dhepā is the larger river, the name of Punarbhabā is given to the combined streams from this point onwards. Leaving Kotwāli thānā the river enters that of Gangārāmpur, near the headquarters of which it sends off a branch called the Brahmani, which after a course of 18 miles rejoins the parent stream on the Māldā border. A few miles below Gangārāmpur the two channels are united by a canal. On nearing the boundary of Māldā the

river turns due south, and runs parallel with this for about 20 miles through a stretch of low-lying country called the Dubā, from its being subject to inundation in the rainy season, till it enters Māldā, a few miles below the important grain mart of Nithpur. Its ultimate destination is the Mahānanda. The Punarbhabā is navigable by country boats during the rains as far as its junction with the Dhepā and even higher. At other times of the year its upper reaches are shallow and easily fordable, but during its course through the Dubā its channel narrows and deepens and is never fordable even in the height of the dry season. The town of Dinājpur is situated on its left bank. Besides Dinājpur and Nithpur the most impotant places on its banks are Gangārāmpur and Nāyābāzār. The former is a thānā headquarters, and the latter an important trading centre. A considerable export trade in paddy and rice is carried by this river, the principal collecting centres being Nāyābāzār and Nithpur.

Dhepā. The Dhepā takes its rise in a marsh called Saselāpiyālā in the Thākurgāon thānā, a few miles north of the source of the Punarbhabā. Entering Birganj it is connected near the thānā headquarters with the Atrāi by a canal called the Mālijol. This canal was dug by a Muhammadan chief named Sādut Ali, and previous to 1787-8 (the year in which the Tistā, of which the Atrāi is a branch, changed its course), carried a considerable volume of water. Of recent years it, like the Dhepā itself, has silted up, and is never navigable for large boats even in the rains. The only places worth mention on the banks of the Dhepā are Birganj, the thānā headquarters, but otherwise unimportant, and Kāntānagar, where is an old and interesting temple now in process of restoration by the present Mahārājā of Dinājpur. The bed of the river is broad, sandy and shallow. When it is in flood large boats can sometimes get up as high as Birganj. In the dry season it is easily fordable anywhere. Besides the Dhepā the Punarbhabā has several small tributaries, of which the Narta, the Siāldāngā, the Hānchākātākhāl, and the Nunā may be mentioned. They are none of them of any importance.

Atrāi. The Atrāi enters the district on the north-east near the village of Joyganj and, flowing southwards for some 84 miles through the thānās of Birganj, Kotwāli, Bālurghāt and Patnitolā, enters Rājshāhi in the extreme south. Passing through Rājshāhi it finally joins a branch of the Ganges called the Baral in the Pabnā district. It is said that the present Atrāi was at one time the main channel of the Tistā, but in 1787-8 this latter river changed its course and made its way to the Brahmaputra through the Rangpur district, thereby greatly diminishing the volume of water passing through the Atrāi and its sister channels the Jamunā and Karatoyā. Under orders of the Governor-General in Council an attempt was made in June 1889 to restore the Tistā to its original channel, but was abandoned as impracticable six

months later. Since those days the importance of the Atrāi has suffered still further diminution from a tendency to silt up noticeable in many Bengal rivers, the action of which has been hastened by the raising of the level of the river-bed in the earthquake of 1897. Notwithstanding, it is still the most important river in the district, and in the rains carries a considerable export trade in grain. Its channel is wide, shallow, and sandy, and its stream sluggish. At the time of the Revenue Survey in 1863, it was described by Major Sherwill as constantly changing its course, but of recent years such changes, if any, have been slight. During the rainy season it is navigable for large boats throughout its course in the Dinājpur district. During the rest of the year it is fordable. The principal towns on its banks are Joyganj, Khānsāmā, Kaugāon, Samjhiā, Kumārganj, Patirām, Bālurghāt and Patnitolā. Most of these are important grain marts, though with the diversion of the main stream of the Tistā, and the silting up of the river, their importance has considerably diminished. Khānsāmā, Kumārganj, Bālurghāt and Patnitolā are police headquarters, and of these Bālurghāt is also the administrative centre of one of the three subdivisions of the district.

A short distance to the east of Kāntānagar the Atrāi throws out from its western bank a branch called the Gāburā, which passing close to the town of Dinājpur rejoins the main stream near Kaugāon, after a course of about 15 miles. About 5 miles below the offshoot of the Gāburā the river throws off from its opposite or east bank another branch called the Kānkrā, which also rejoins the parent stream a little above Samjhiā. The important mart of Chirirbandar, which is also the headquarters of the police outpost of that name, stands on the left bank of the Kānkrā. During its course through the district the Atrāi is joined by several small streams, of which the Old Atrai and the Ichhāmati on its eastern bank are the most important. Both these rivers enter the district to the east of Khānsāma. The former joins the Atrāi about 12 miles below this town while the latter joins it at Patirām some 36 miles in a straight line lower down.

Jamunā.

The Jamunā is a small river, said to have been, like the Atrāi and the Karatoyā, one of the original channels of the Tistā. It enters the district from Rangpur some miles north-east of Pārbatipur, and flowing almost due south passes into Bogrā near Hilli, and finally joins the Atrāi in the Rājshāhi district. Its course in Dinājpur is about 65 miles. The channel of this river, though narrow, has a fair depth, and is navigable for good sized country boats during the rainy season for a considerable portion of its course in the district.

Pārbatipur, Phulbāri, and Berāmpur are situated on its banks; all are marts of some importance and the first and second are also thānā headquarters. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton speaks of its tributaries, the Tilāi and the Chitā, but these are streamlets of very little account.

Karatoyā.

The Karatoyā is one of the old channels of the Tistā, and forms the eastern boundary of the district for about 50 miles, separating it from Rangpur and finally passing into the latter district at the extreme south-eastern corner of Dinājpur. The course of this river is tortuous in the extreme. So many modifications have taken place in its channel, and the name changes so often, that it is a matter of great difficulty to trace its exact course. It is however generally accepted under one name or another as forming the boundary of the two districts. Sir William Hunter describes this part of the country as a maze of old water-courses and stagnant marshes and he is not far wrong. An old branch of the river, sometimes called the Kālānadi or Morānadi, which was once the main stream, passes close to the village of Nawābganj, where the thānā of that name is situated on its banks. This old channel spreads out into a large *bil*, a few miles north of Nawābganj, and is almost stagnant. It is deep and muddy in places, and elsewhere shallow and sandy. This channel as well as the main channel is navigable by medium sized country boats during the rains. The principal places on the banks of the Karatoyā are Nawābganj, already described as on the old channel, and Ghorāghāt, the centre of a police outpost and a considerable mart, a few miles below the junction of the old and new channels.

The Karatoyā has no important tributaries on the Dinājpur side, but east of Nawābganj it is joined by a considerable stream, the Khorubujā, from Rangpur.

There is some doubt as to whether the Atrāi or the Karatoyā was originally the main stream of the Tistā, but there is evidence to show that the latter, shrunken as it now is, was at one time a very considerable river. Sir William Hunter says that "It formed the boundary between the Bengal and Kamrup kingdoms at the time of the Mahābhārat, and since that epoch has generally marked the eastern limit of the rule of the successive Bengal dynasties."

GEOLOGY.

From the point of view of the geologist the district is exceptionally uninteresting. Almost the whole area is covered by alluvial deposits of recent formation. In the southern half of the district the soil consists of a clayey silt, ash coloured in appearance, locally called *khiār*. This, a soft sticky loam in the rainy season, hardens almost to the consistency of cement in the dry weather, when it is unsuitable for vegetation. In the northern half of the district and on the banks of some of the principal rivers in the south, the soil consists of a sandy loam mixed, towards the north, with gravel. This goes by the local name of *pali*. An interesting geological formation called the Bārind occurs in this district in common with other parts of Eastern Bengal. This belongs to the old alluvium, and, briefly described, is composed of beds of stiff reddish brown clay, yellowish on the surface. The nodular limestone deposits, a frequent source

of material for road metal in some parts of India, occur in this to a small extent. Pisolitic ferruginous concretions are also found.

BOTANY. Forests, properly so called, are almost entirely absent from Dinājpur, with the exception of one or two patches of tree jungle on the banks of the Tāngan river in the north of the district. These patches are the survivals of a once extensive tract of forest which is said to have extended from a point some distance south of Thākurgāon right through the Jalpāiguri district to the Himalayas. The characteristic of this tree jungle is the presence of large forest trees interspersed with short thorny varieties and scrub, which render it dense and impenetrable. The Prānnagar jungle in the Birganj thānā was at one time a fairly thick forest, notorious as the haunt of dacoits and tigers, but it is now greatly shrunken in size, and is rather a collection of scattered clumps of trees than a forest.

Coppices of sāl (*Shorea robusta*) are fairly common throughout the district. A long list of these might be given, but it will suffice to mention that on both banks of the Tāngan in the north of the Pirganj thānā, and that to the west of the Punarbhabā in the south of the Kotwāli thānā, which are perhaps the largest in size. Common as it is, the sāl tree never attains a good growth in this district. It is stunted, gnarled, and of small girth, and compares very unfavourably with the fine sāl trees of the Assam forests. A reason for its stunted size may be the common practice of burning the undergrowth in these coppices in the beginning of the hot season, to provide grazing for the village cattle. The timber is used in building, but is by no means first class.

Notwithstanding the want of true forest, Dinājpur is by no means deficient in vegetation. The northern half, especially, might fairly be called well wooded. The roads are bordered with trees of all sizes and varieties, amongst which the most conspicuous are the banyan (*Ficus indica*), the peepul (*Ficus religiosa*), the pākar (*Ficus infectoria*), the simul or cotton tree (*Bombax malabaricum*), the nim (*Melia indica*), the tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), the mango, the jack (*Artocarpus integrifolia*), the bābul (*Acacia arabica*), the Indian plum or ber (*Zizyphus jujuba*), the champak (*Michelia champaca*), and the hijal (*Barringtonia acutangula*). The villages are embowered in greenery, clumps of wild bamboos are to be seen on all sides, and the banks of the rivers and old tanks are overgrown with thickets of shrubs and bramble. The southern portion of the district is more open, and palms such as the palmyra or *tāl*, and the date-palm or *khejur*, are much in evidence, and give a distinctive note to the scenery. In parts of the district, especially in the neighbourhood of some of the large *bils*, stretches of grass jungle are found. The most extensive of these is the tract of country called the Dubā extending along the Punarbhabā river from the extreme south

western corner of the district well into the Gangārāmpur thānā. Here are to be found many species of grasses and reeds, such as the *ikra (Saccharum arundinaceum)* which when set upright and plastered with mud makes an excellent house wall; the *nagor-muthā*, a species of tall grass with a triangular blade or stem, used for making sleeping mats and elephant *gadis;* the *khaskhas (Andropogon muricatus)*, a plant with an odorous root, used in many parts of India for making screens, which, when moistened, form a pleasant protection against the west winds of the hot weather; the sun grass, called in the vernacular *san*, which is the best material for thatching. Tamarix and *Rosa involucrata* are also common, the latter bearing a great resemblance to the English wild-rose. In this district the ubiquitous bamboo usurps to some extent the place of reeds, for building, fencing, making fish traps, and other purposes. The *nal (Phragmites roxburghii)*, a species of tall reed with a feathery top, and the *sola (Aschynomene paludosa)*, a plant from whose root a fine white pith, greatly used for making sun-helmets, floats for fishing nets, etc., is obtained, are common in many of the old tanks. The former is a marked feature of the fine old tank called Mahipāl dighi, forming as it does a thick belt all round it. The finest trees in the district are undoubtedly the figs. Many magnificent examples of the banyan and peepul are to be seen, and they afford a grateful protection from the sun in the hot weather. Perhaps the finest specimen of the former is to be found at Hemtābād, a favourite camping ground for touring officers, and several tents can be pitched with ease beneath its shade. The *simul* or cotton tree is common, and attains a fine growth, and in the months of January and February, when ablaze with large crimson blossoms, presents a splendid appearance, in striking contrast to the blue of the sky. The tamarind, a handsome tree with spreading acacia-like foliage of a beautiful shade of green, is also frequently met with. A curious belief prevails about this tree that when planted close to human habitations it is liable to cause malaria. I cannot vouch for the truth of this belief.

An account of the flora of Dinājpur would be incomplete without some description of the bamboo, so common in the district and utilised for so many purposes. Of these the *bara bāns* is the largest, most valuable, and most generally cultivated. It is used for posts, rafters, beams and sometimes for firewood. Another valuable bamboo is the *jāti bāns*, also greatly used in building for making battens, cross-pieces, etc. The *māklā bāns* is chiefly employed in making mats and baskets but is also used for making ceilings, and is said to be more immune to the attacks of white-ants than any other kind. The *kāntā bāns* or thorny bamboo generally grows wild, though it is also sometimes grown near tombs and monuments for ornament, on account of its beautiful feathery tops. It is very strong and is utilised in making fences and spear shafts.

Two species of cane, a thick and a thin variety, probably *Calamus latifolius* and *Calamus gracilis*, are found in the district in woods, and in thickets near villages where the soil is sufficiently rich and moist. The thin variety is employed for baskets and wicker work. The thick variety is not much used.

Flowers, as distinct from tree blossoms and certain flowering creepers of the convolvulus family, are not common in the district, and do not deserve any special mention.

FAUNA. Mammals.

With the exception of leopards, the larger mammalia are becoming very scarce in Dinājpur. Major Sherwill in his Revenue Survey Report, concluded in 1863, speaks of tiger, buffalo, bārah singhā or swamp deer, hog deer and badger, as common. The Prānnagar jungle in the Birganj thānā was some 30 years ago so notorious for tigers that no traveller would pass through it at night, or even in the daytime, if alone. It is said that the nuisance became so great that special guns were issued to shikāris in that neighbourhood for the destruction of these animals, and hunts were organised by the officials and zamindārs, with the same object. Nowadays the tiger, equally with the buffalo and the swamp deer, is only a memory, though in the low-lying marshy country on the Māldā border, in the south-west of the district, rumours of tiger are sometimes heard. An occasional hog deer is sometimes, though rarely, met with in the same locality. Leopards are still fairly common in most parts of the district. They are generally found in the neighbourhood of villages, and have their lairs in the thickets surrounding old tanks, and in old graveyards. The ruined remains of temples, mosques, and dwelling houses, so often found overgrown with jungle in the vicinity of towns and villages, are favourite haunts of these animals. They levy a considerable toll on the cattle and goats of the villagers, but rarely attack human beings. Instances of man eating by leopards are uncommon, though wood-cutters and persons gathering firewood in the jungle are sometimes attacked by one of these animals, whose siesta they have probably disturbed. Wild pig are nowadays rare except in the western and north-western thānās near the Purneā border, where they do a certain amount of damage to the crops. Various kinds of wild cats, such as the ordinary wild cat (resembling the common Indian domestic cat but larger and fiercer), the tiger cat, the civet cat, and the fishing cat *(Felis niverrina)* are common enough. The last named, locally called *māch birāl*, a large sized spotted animal with a short tail, is found in marsh-land and thickets bordering rivers, swamps and old tanks, and feeds principally on fish and wild fowl. The various members of the cat tribe are very destructive of small game and will occasionally devour calves and kids. Jackal, fox and mongoose are common. The crab-eating variety of the latter is sometimes seen, and is probably identical with the badger spoken of by Major Sherwill, as it bears some resemblances to that animal. Hyæna are nowhere mentioned as indigenous

to the district, but in May 1909 an unmistakable hyæna was seen in the Bansihāri thānā. Hares are found in the grass lands but are not numerous. The shorter tailed Bengal monkey (*Macacus rhesus*) is very occasionally seen. Old writers like Dr. Buchanan Hamilton and Major Sherwill make no mention of the *mithun* or bison (*Bos gaurus*) as being found in the district, but in 1907 a young full grown bison bull was shot by a villager near Rāniganj in the extreme north of the district, after it had attacked and killed a man. This was probably a solitary animal which had made its way into Dinājpur from the Jalpāiguri Terāi through the strip of forest, previously alluded to, on the banks of the Tāngan. The Gangetic dolphin or *susu* (*Platanista gangetica*) is to be seen in some of the larger rivers. Otters are spoken of by Dr. Buchanan Hamilton as very numerous but appear to have become either extinct or very scarce.

The birds of the district include vultures of different kinds, kites—amongst which the Brahmani kite (*Haliastur indus*), a handsome bird with maroon back and white head and neck, is conspicuous—eagles, hawks, swallows and martins, *moinas* and king-crows. Owls are of many varieties, amongst which the small screech-owl is the prettiest and most common. The common Indian crow and the large black carrion crow are plentiful. Amongst birds of the cuckoo family the brain-fever bird (*Hierococcyx varius*)—the monotonous repetition of whose call note adds to the trials of the hot season,—and the coucal or crow pheasant (*Centropus sinensis*) are found. Small birds of handsome plumage or otherwise attractive appearance are the hoopoe, the golden oriole, the blue jay (*Coriacus indica*), the bee-eaters with their long, slender bills, and green plumage, king-fishers large and small. The plumage of the latter is generally a blending of metallic and turquoise blue, of indescribable brilliance, but the most common species of all is the Indian pied king-fisher (*Ceryle varia*), a black and white bird who is to be seen industriously plying his trade over every piece of water. The night jar or goat sucker (*Caprimulgus*) is found everywhere, and its peculiar note resembling a stone striking ice, which can be heard at a great distance at night, has earned it the name of the ice bird amongst Europeans. Of the columbæ, the green pigeon, the common wood pigeon, and various kinds of doves are fairly plentiful. The green pigeon shows a special fondness for trees of the fig family, to the fruit of which it is very partial. An extremely beautiful and rather uncommon species of dove is worthy of special mention. This is a wood dove with beautiful dark green, crimson and copper plumage, and is one of the prettiest birds in the district. Amongst water birds may be mentioned the common coot (*Fulica atra*), the purple moor-hen (*Porphyrio poliocephalus*), the common moor-hen, the dabchick, several kinds of herons and cranes, and two species of cormorant, Birds.

one a small black species and the other a larger bird with black body and wings and yellowish head and neck. Sand pipers or snippets of various kinds and the Indian river tern are common to every stream and *bil.* Birds of the plover family found in the district are the grey plover, the little ringed plover, and the red-wattled plover *(Sareogrammus)*, the latter distinguished by its peculiar cry, which sounds something like "did you do it" or "pity to do it." Snipe are not very common, but a few of the ordinary kinds, *i.e.*, fantail, pintail, jack and painted snipe may be met with on the edges of some of the larger *bils*. The land game birds of the district are the black partridge or *titur (Francolinus vulgarus)*, the *kyah* or swamp partridge *(Ortygiornis gularis)*, the grey quail and the button quail. The latter are to be found anywhere in grass jungle, but are never plentiful. Partridges of both kinds are fairly plentiful in the low grass country on the lower reaches of the Punarbhabā, but elsewhere are rare. The commonest wild fowl are the gadwall, the pochard, the common teal, the large and small whistling teal, and the cotton teal. These frequent some of the *bils* and rivers, and occasionally tanks also. The ruddy sheldrake or Brahmani duck is met with sometimes, but the larger and finer species of duck such as the mallard, the pintail, and the spot bill, are rarely, if ever, seen.

Reptiles. Snakes are fairly common, and the poisonous varieties are the cause of some loss of life, especially during the rains. The number of species is not large, the principal being the cobra, the *dhaman* or rat snake *(Zamenis mucosus)*, the common *karait*, various grass snakes, and some water snakes. The *hamadryas* or king cobra *(Naia bungarus)*, the banded *karait (Bungarus fasciatus)* and the python or boa constrictor *(Python molurus)* are occasionally found. The former two varieties grow to a length of 7 or 8 feet, and both prey upon other snakes. The python rarely exceeds 12 feet, though individuals may attain 20 feet. Of the lizards the most familiar are the geckos, amongst which we may distinguish especially the small house gecko to be seen on the walls and ceilings of every house, and the large gecko *(Gecko stentor)* whose peculiar cry has given the name to the whole genus. This is most commonly found in the north-western portions of the district. On the edges of many of the *bils* the monitor or *guisāmp* is found. This is a large lizard, with some outward resemblance to a crocodile, and is eaten by some low caste Hindus. Two kinds of crocodiles, the magar *(Crocodilus palustris)* called locally *kumir* or *bochā*, a blunt-nosed species, and the *ghariyāl (gavialis)* or long-snouted, fish-eating crocodile, are found in some of the rivers, especially the Nāgar, Punarbhabā, and Mahānanda, and in some *bils* and old tanks. The *magar* rarely exceeds 12 feet in length, 10 feet being a fine specimen, while the *ghariyāl* rarely attains more than 7 or 8 feet. The former has the reputation of being a man-eater, but in this district instances of deaths from

this cause are rare, if not entirely unknown, and the villagers appear to have little fear of them. The common river turtle (*Testudo elegans*) is found in most of the rivers, and is eaten by some of the lower orders.

Fish.

Dinājpur was at one time famous for its fish and was known in the Mahabharata as Matsya Desha, or the fish country. This is no longer the case, and the principal fish supply is now imported by train from Manihārighāt and Sārāghāt on the Ganges. Some is also brought from Purneā. During the rainy season, when the rivers are swollen, the local fish-supply is especially scanty, owing to the inadequacy of the methods of the fishermen in coping with deep and rapid waters.

The most common fish in the district is probably the carp, of which the best known species are the *rohu* (*Labeo rohita*) and the *kātlā* (*Catla buchanani*). Both of these are commonly reared in tanks and sometimes attain a large size. They are a favourite table fish, and are a popular and acceptable gift amongst the higher classes. There are also found the following: the *boāl*, a fresh water shark (*Wallago attu*), popularly supposed in the historic tank of Tapandighi to attain the incredible length of 20 feet; the *māgur*, a cat fish, which is much esteemed as diet for invalids and convalescents, notwithstanding its repulsive appearance; the *paftā* (*Callichrus pabda*), a small but palatable table fish; the *shol* (*Ophiocephalus striatus*), a snake-headed fish, whose fry are not only well flavoured but of a pretty gold colour and are sometimes kept for their beauty in glass bowls; other snake-headed fishes such as the *gajāl*, *gorai* and *cheng*; the *kai* (*Anabas scandens*) or the climbing perch, which is distinguished by its ability to get from one piece of water to another (*incidentally* there is a legend that it has been known to climb trees); the *khoksā* (*Trichogaster fasciatus*); the *bhedā* (*Ornandus marmoratus*); the *baim* (*Mastercembelus armatus*), an eel-shaped fish found in tanks, muddy rivers and sluggish streams; the *tepā* (*Tetradon patoka*) which Buchanan Hamilton describes as "a bad small fish reckoned impure by the Brahmins." Among crustacea we have prawns of several kinds, locally called 'chingri,' and *kānkrā* or crabs of the fresh water variety, which are eaten by the poorer classes.

CLIMATE.

The district of Dinājpur lies just outside the tropics and its climate approximates more to that of Behār than to that of the more easterly districts of the province. The cold weather may be said to set in early in November and to continue until the end of February. Although in a normal year the days begin to be hot from about the 20th of February, the nights remain cool till well into April. The hot weather begins with strong westerly winds about the 1st of March, and continues till about the middle of June. The west is the prevailing wind till about the middle of April when broken weather sets in, and the heavy showers which are of fairly frequent occurrence till towards the end of May are

generally followed for a day or two by light easterly breezes. The climate during the hot season, hot as it is, is by no means unbearable. The air is extremely dry, and exercise, even in the middle of the day, is not accompanied by excessive fatigue. This is perhaps the healthiest season of the year. With the break of the monsoon, which generally occurs about the middle of June, the rainy season commences and continues till the end of September or beginning of October. The heaviest rain usually falls in June and August, and periods of flood, when the rivers rise and overflow their banks, may be looked for twice in the season. With the setting in of the rains the climate changes completely, and becomes excessively moist and unhealthy, but the heat is tempered by easterly winds, which spring up towards sunset and lower the temperature during the early portion of the night. As the rainy season advances these winds disappear, and the climate from the middle of August to the middle of October is excessively enervating and depressing. From the middle of October the nights become appreciably cooler, though the days remain hot for some time longer. A more agreeable climate than that of this district during the cold weather it would be hard to find. The days are bright and sunny, and the atmosphere crisp and clear. The cold is never extreme, though in the beginning of January fires are sometimes necessary. Little rain falls during the cold weather, with the exception of some light showers about Christmas, and a thunderstorm or two in February. In December easterly and northerly winds are common, and are considered dangerous to those whose constitutions have been undermined by repeated attacks of fever.

Temperature.

The average maximum temperature is lowest in January when it is 75·7 and highest in April when it is 94·6, giving a variation of about 19. The average minimum temperature varies from 49·4 in January to 78·9 in July, giving a variation of 29·5 inches. The absolute maximum temperature varies from 82·3 in December to 108·1 in May and the absolute minimum temperature from 38·9 in February to 73·3 in July. The daily range of temperature as given by the difference between the average maximum and average mimimum temperatures, month by month, varies from 21·4 to 26·3 in the cold weather months and falls as low as 10·2 in August. From June to mid-October it is never more than about 13, but after that it increases rapidly till the maximum is reached in January and February.

Humidity.

The humidity of the atmosphere is lowest in March and thereafter increases steadily till May. The breaking of the monsoon in June is accompanied by a marked increase in humidity, which is steadily maintained throughout the three following months, the percentage of saturation being 90. In October there is a slight fall, and from then to the end of January there is little change. From the commencement of February the decrease in humidity is rapid till the lowest percentage of saturation, 66, is

reached in March. The variation in humidity during the whole monsoon period is little over 1 per cent.

During January and February the air movement is from the west forming part of the general drift of dry air from the Gangetic plain. Towards the close of February the westerly current weakens materially and in March the winds are exceedingly variable in direction though considerably stronger than in the first two months. Damp easterly winds appear in April and blow intermittently until the setting in of the monsoon in the first half of June; then the portion of the bay current passing into Bengal is deflected westwards owing to the action of the Himalayan barrier and the prevailing direction of air movement in Dinājpur during the monsoon period, which lasts roughly until the middle of October, is from slightly to the south of east. With the termination of the rains, dry northerly and north-easterly winds again set in and hold until the end of the year. **Winds.**

Rainfall. There is a very considerable variation in the rainfall in different parts of the district, the fall getting heavier as the north of the district, which is nearest to the Himalayas, is approached. Thus the annual average at Nithpur, the most southerly rainfall recording staion, is 54·65 inches, Dinājpur which is situated about the centre of the district records 66·6 inches, while at Ātwāri in the extreme north the average fall reaches the respectable total of 96·59 inches. For the whole district the average fall is 66·93 inches, of which 1·21 inches fall in the period from November to February, 9·75 inches from March to May, and 55·96 inches from June to October. The rainfall in the cold season is exceptionally light, Ātwāri, which has the heaviest total rainfall in the district, being especially dry at that time of year. March is generally dry with an occasional thunder-shower. The spring rains are chiefly due to cyclonic storms from the Bay of Bengal and begin in the first or second week of April. During the rest of April and the first week of May the weather is broken and showery. The greater part of May is dry and the rainy season does not usually open till about the second week of June, when there is heavy rain sometimes continued into July. In this latter month the rains lighten somewhat and spells of hot sunny weather are common. In normal years very heavy rain occurs again about the middle of August, but sometimes is deferred to the beginning of September. September and the early part of October are generally hot with occasional showers.

Statistics of rainfall for the various recording stations are given below for the cold weather (November to February), the hot weather (March to May), and the rainy season (June to October), the figures shown being the averages recorded in each case. It is to be observed that there are considerable variations from year to year above or below these averages; as an example, if we take

the three years 1900, 1901 and 1902 we find that the rainfall at Dinājpur Sadar was 85·86, 48·86 and 85·66 respectively:—

Station.	Years recorded.	November to February.	March to May.	June to October.	Annual average.
Dinājpur	10	1·09	9·50	55·46	66·06
Thākurgāon ...	10	1·04	9·10	68·36	78·52
Bālurghāt	10	1·57	10·18	45·74	57·50
Nithpur	10	2·88	8·08	43·67	54·65
Gangārāmpur ...	10	1·15	8·65	52·77	62·59
Nawābganj... ...	10	0·92	11·38	49·64	61·95
Churāman	10	1·42	7·27	46·40	55·09
Rāiganj	10	1·04	7·79	53·88	62·71
Sitābganj	10	1·05	9·03	55·00	65·10
Rāmganj	10	1·00	9·68	59·84	70·53
Ātwāri	8	·70	13·09	82·79	96·59
Birganj	8	1·10	11·04	57·00	69·15
Pārbatipur	8	·78	11·98	56·91	69·68
Average ...	...	1·21	9·75	55·96	66·93

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY.

The early history of the Dinājpur district rests on a number of vague traditions and legends. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton refers to the extreme obscurity of these traditions, owing to the Hindus, by whom they have been preserved, having been at one time nearly eradicated. The historical account given below is mainly based on that of Dr. Buchanan Hamilton, supplemented by a history of the Dinājpur Raj, from the pen of Mr. E. B. Westmacott, who between 1868 and 1877 spent some six years in the district, first as Joint Magistrate and subsequently as Collector. LEGENDARY HISTORY.

The earliest legends place the district under the Government of Parasurām, a powerful monarch, whose capital was Mahāsthān in Bogrā. This monarch is believed to have been a sixth incarnation of the god Vishnu. Later, Dinājpur is mentioned as the home of the Hindu sage Vālmiki, who gave shelter to Sitā, the exiled spouse of Rām, king of Ajodhyā (Oudh) and the seventh incarnation of Vishnu. Tarpanghāt on the Karatoyā river in the Nawābganj thānā is still pointed out as the place where Vālmiki bathed and performed religious rites, and a mound of bricks near by, known as Sitākot, is said to have been the residence of Sitā. We next find Bali Rājā, an Osur or worshipper of Shivā, governing the country. He is chiefly known as being the father of Bān Rājā, a mighty hero with a thousand arms, who fought with Krishnā, King of Brindaban and Mathurā, and the 8th incarnation of Vishnu. The latter is said to have invaded the country and defeated Bān Rājā, who, however, was saved by his patron Shivā, and escaped with the loss of 998 of his arms. Malarial fever is said to have made its first appearance during this war. The thānā of Gangārāmpur is full of relics of Bān Rājā. At Bānnagar on the east bank of the Punarbhabā are to be seen the ruins of a town and palace where this prince is supposed to have lived. About 6 miles south of the thānā is Tapandighi, the largest tank in the district, said to have been dug by him. Here tradition says he swung for 1,000 years from hooks passed through the skin of his back, in honour of Shivā. At Bānnagar are the sacred pools Amrit Kunda and Jivat Kunda bestowed by this god on Bān Rājā, and originally endowed with the properties of conferring life and immortality. Another large tank Kālādighi, dug by orders of Kālā Rāni, queen of Bān Rājā, lies about two miles to the east of the thānā. Traces of this prince are found in Nawābganj thānā also, where some ruins in a forest are said to be the remains of one of his residences. The next great personage about whom

tradition gathers is Virāt Rājā. This monarch was a contemporary of Bhagadatta, King of Kamrup, and the Karatoyā formed the boundary between the two kingdoms. In his days Dinājpur was called Matsya Desha, or the fish country. He is said to have helped Judisthir, the eldest of the Pāndavās, in his fight for the supremacy of India. There is considerable doubt as to whether this monarch preceded or followed Bān Rājā. Traces of Virāt Rājā are to be found at Kāntānagar in the Birganj thānā, where the remains of an old fort are pointed out as the place where he kept his cattle, while Ghorāghāt, in the south-west corner of the district, derives its name from the fact that Virāt Rājā kept his horses there. Some nine miles south-west of Ghorāghāt are the ruins of his palace. Bhim, the warrior hero of the solar race, and brother of Judisthir, appears to have visited the district in Virāt's reign and some stone implements of agriculture attributed to him are still preserved near Pārbatipur.

The Pāl Dynasty.

It is not until we get to the Pāl dynasty that there is much foundation for the stories told about the successive rulers of the district. The Pāl Rājās were princes of Gaur, a name which seems to have applied rather to the whole province, of which Dinājpur formed the principal part, than to the city of that name situated in Māldā, which was probably not built till later. The founders of this dynasty appear to have come from western India and to have become Buddhists. Traces of them are found in various parts of the district, but principally in the south-east. An inscription on a pillar near Mangalbāri, in Patnitolā thānā, known to archæologists as the Bādal pillar and to the villagers in the vicinity as Bhim's Oxgoad (Bhimer Panthi) gives a genealogy of the family, and mentions especially Rājās Devi Pāl, Surā Pāl and Narāyan Pāl as the rulers of an important kingdom with many subject chiefs.

A large tank or dighi in the Bansihāri thānā bears the name of Rājā Mahipāl, who, according to an inscription found at Nalanda, reigned about A. D. 856. The village of Mahipur and parganā Mahinagar in the vicinity are apparently connected with the same monarch. The sites of the palaces of a number of other princes of this dynasty are to be seen in Bogrā, and there is reason to believe that the province of Gaur under their rule extended from Rangpur to Monghyr, and was famous throughout India. There is no certainty as to how long the rule of these princes lasted, but before the Muhammadan conquest in A. D. 1203, the Sen dynasty had supplanted them, and had made the city of Gaur, the ruins of which are still to be seen in Māldā, their capital. It is believed that the Pāls retired before them into Kamrup.

The Sen Dynasty.

The Sen kingdom was divided into six provinces, the central one being Gaur, surrounded by the other five, Bārendra, Banga, Bagri, Rārh and Mithilā. Notwithstanding the statement made in the Bādal pillar inscription that the Pāl kingdom was bounded on the north by the Himalayas, it is improbable that the rule of the

Pāls or their successors the Sens extended to the northern portion of the Dinājpur district, and the fact that the Muhammadan power which overthrew the latter had an outpost at Damdamā on the Punarbhabā, some 18 miles south of Dinājpur, shows that the kingdom of Gaur extended no further north than this. The fact that there are no remains connected with the Sen dynasty in the district would seem to indicate that their rule was a short one. Ādisur, the first of the line to succeed the Pāls, reintroduced Brāhmanism, and brought several families of Brāhmans from Kanaouj in upper India. The most famous member of the family appears to have been his son Ballāl Sen, who is credited with the reorganisation of the caste system, and the introduction of Kulinism. These rulers resided sometimes at Gaur and sometimes at their earlier capital Bikrampur, near Dāccā. The last of them, Rājā Lakshman Sen, made Nadiā his capital, and after his defeat by Bakhtiyār Khilji, the Viceroy of the Āfghān Emperor of Delhi, escaped in a boat to Bikrampur, from which place he made terms with the conqueror.

The AFGHĀNS.

Bakhtiyār Khilji, after destroying Nadiā, made Gaur his capital. The early Muhammadan rulers of Gaur were for about a century and half no more than the viceroys of the emperor of Delhi, but the great power enjoyed by them, and the distance of their seat of Government from Delhi, tempted them finally to assert their independence. Alā-ud-din, who reigned from A.D. 1340—42, was the first to refuse tribute. His successor, Shams-ud-dīn, was attacked by the Emperor Firoz Shā, and forced to fall back upon Ghorāghāt. Terms were arranged between him and the Emperor, and the latter returned to Delhi, leaving him in enjoyment of his post. At the beginning of the 15th century Gonesh, a Hindu Hākim or Rājā of Dinwāj, and the ostensible founder of the Dinājpur Raj, becoming powerful, defeated Sāhāb-ud-din, ruler of Gaur, and seized the reins of Government in favour of his son, Jadu or Jitmal. The latter became a convert to Muhammadanism and adopted the name of Jālāl-ud-din. There is some doubt as to whether this Jālāl-ud-din really was the son of Gonesh, as we hear of the latter defeating and imprisoning him. He again came to the throne, on the death of Gonesh probably, and is notorious for having compelled all the Hindus in Dinājpur, except those who escaped into the neighbouring kingdom of Kamrup, to embrace the Moslem faith. Jālāl-ud-din was succeeded by his son Ahamad Shāh, who, after a reign of three years, was murdered in A. D. 1426. This ends the connection of the family of Gonesh with the Government of Gaur. From the time of Jālāl-ud-din to that of Husain Shāh (A. D. 1497—1521) little is known of the history of Dinājpur. There is reason to suppose that in the reign of Husain Shāh the Hindu chiefs in the northern portion of the district began again to show signs of activity, as we find the former strengthening the military posts at Damdamā and Ghorāghāt, apparently as a defence against some menacing power or

powers in the north and east. The remains of a fine military road constructed by this ruler, and extending across the south of the district, from Damdamā to Ghorāghāt eventually formed the basis of a District Board road, which is still kept up. It is possible that Mohesh Rājā, the remains of whose palace are to be seen near Hemtābād, and who was a person of some consequence, lived about this period, and that Husain Shāh was the Muhammadan ruler who overthrew him. Notwithstanding this apparent activity on the part of Husain Shāh in protecting his frontier, history shows that during all this period the viceroys of Bengal were more occupied with the course of affairs in Delhi than with their northern boundary, and during the wars between them and the emperors of Delhi their Hindu subjects found ample opportunity of acquiring wealth and power.

The Muhammadan rulers of Gaur at this time were fanatics in religion, and were greatly under the influence of men dedicated to a religious life and called Pirs or saints. In every part of the district are to be found the tombs or monuments of these personages, many of them erected on the ruins of older Hindu buildings, probably temples, which in their iconoclastic fury they had destroyed. Many of these monuments are still resorted to by the Muhammadans of the district for purposes of worship. Some interesting mosques also, the remains of which are still to be seen, date from this period. Among the most noteworthy of these buildings may be mentioned the tomb of Pir Bazar-ud-din, near Hemtābād, which is still in a fair state of preservation, and shows distinct signs of having been built with the materials of some Hindu house, probably that of Mohesh Rājā, in whose expulsion this saint had some hand. Not far from this is the ruin of a quadrangular pyramid called Husain Shāh's *takt* or throne, on which the tombs of two other saints have been erected at some later period. The presence of this so-called throne of Husain Shāh affords evidence that he was the Muhammadan ruler who defeated Mohesh Rājā. The erection of such a pyramid would be a natural way of celebrating his victory. Near Damdamā on the site of the Punarbhabā, the present Gangarāmpur thānā head-quarters, previously mentioned as having been a Muhammadan military outpost, is a fine tank called Dhaldighi, evidently made for the benefit of the garrison, and on its banks are a small mosque and the monument of the saint Mullāh Atā-ud-din. From an inscription on the mosque, the material of which tradition says were brought from Bānnagar, it appears that it was built by the commander of the troops in the reign of Husain Shāh. As I have said, the remains of these mosques and monuments are very numerous throughout the district, but few or none have any claims to architectural distinction, while extremely little is known of the so-called holy men in whose honour they were erected. One of the best known of these saints appears to have been Saiyid Nekmardan, in memory of whom a great

fair or *melā* is still held at Nekmarad in the Rānisankail thānā. No proper monument of this saint is preserved, but Nekmarad, the place where he lived, is regarded as especially holy.

Although the military posts at Damdamā and Ghorāghāt indicate that the northern boundary of the kingdom of Gaur, so far as the Dinājpur district is concerned, terminated here, yet there is little doubt that the Muhammadan generals made frequent expeditions into the regions further north, such as the raid in which Mohesh Rājā fell, and it is even likely that individual leaders established themselves at least temporarily in favourable spots beyond the frontier. Two miles south of Rāniganj in the jurisdiction of Ātwāri outpost, in the extreme north of the district, there is a very interesting fort attributed to Karam Khān, a Muhammadan general of this period. This is surrounded by a lofty double rampart and a moat, and contains a fine tank which, lying as it does east and west, indicates its Muhammadan origin. It is far the finest specimen of a fort extant in the district, and must have been in its day of considerable military strength. An interesting circumstance is the presence of a larger but much less scientifically constructed fort close to it, on the north, where a Hindu Rājā is said to have lived, and to have carried on hostilities with the Muhammadan garrison. The history of the Afghan rulers of Gaur who succeeded Husain Shāh, has little concern with the Dinājpur district. They seem most of them to have come to a violent end, and to have enjoyed reigns more or less brief.

The Moghals.

In A. D. 1526, the Moghals seized the empire of Delhi, and thirteen years later the Emperor Humāyun invaded Bengal, and, after having forced the Āfghān Shere Khān to retreat, seized Gaur, and established his general Jahāngir Kuli Beg on the throne. Shere Khān, however, managed to rally the scattered Āfghāns, and falling on the Emperor on his way back to Delhi, defeated him and regained the sovereignty of Bengal. Shere Khān and his successors maintained their independence till A. D. 1576, when Daud Khān suffered defeat at the hands of the Moghals, and the whole of Bengal returned again to the dominion of Delhi. With Daud Khān ended the sovereignty of the Āfghān princes of Gaur which had lasted nearly four centuries.

The Dinājpur Raj.

In the reign of Akbār we find the first authentic traces of the great zamindāri family of Dinājpur, with which for the next two centuries the history of the district is closely interwoven. To quote Mr. Westmacott: "In A. D. 1600, Akbar divided the empire into 15 Soobas, and made his son Selim Soobadar of Bengal. The Sooba was divided into 24 sarkars, and parts of six of these sarkars fall within the limits of the district of Dinagepoor. About the time of Akbar's settlement there was at Dinagepoor, at the place from which Gonesh, less than two centuries before, derived his title, a man, possibly of the blood of Gonesh, in possession of a considerable part of what are now the districts of Dinagepoor and Maldah. Buchanan calls him Kasi, but whether he

is correct or not, the name is now utterly forgotten. His grave is shown at the door of the Mondeer in the Rajbaree, and offerings of cloth, curds, rice, and plantains are regularly made upon it. His life is reputed to have been very holy, and he is spoken of as a Brahmocharee, Mohonto, or Gosain. It is said that the nucleus of his estate was certain land with which an image of Kalee, named Kalika, and worshipped to the east, was connected, and that in addition to this he became possessed of an image of Krishna named Kaliya, endowed with the whole of the Sarkar, or Havelee, of Panjara. The estate of Dinagepoor was frequently spoken of as Havelee Panjara, even when it included land in several other Sarkars. Had the estate really been a debuttar, or endowment of gods, Raja Radhanath would probably have brought the fact forward as an argument, when in A. D. 1798 he urged all in his power to prevent the sale of the land on which the Rajbaree and family temples stood; but he does not mention it, and it is probably a tradition of recent origin. It is much more probable that the estate dated from earlier times, possibly from those of Gonesh." It appears that this Brāhmachāri left his estate to a disciple, Srimanta Datta Chaudhuri, a Kāyastha householder, who came originally from the east. He had a son and daughter, but the former dying without issue the estates fell to Sukdeb, the daughter's son. Westmacott describes this property according to the thānā divisions as they existed in his time as follows: "Including the whole of Thana Thakoorgaon in the north, the western boundary passes through Ranisonkoil, taking in Pergunna Borogaon, but excluding Kholora and Maldwar, and through Hemtabad, including Mohasoo but not Tajpoor, nor any part of Thana Kaliyagunj, except the northern corner which falls within Pergunna Bajitpoor. This line excludes the estates of Maldwar, Tajpoor, Horeepoor, and Chooramon, which were added to the Collectorate of Dinagepoor, but never formed any part of the zamindar's property. Passing southwards, the boundary takes in half of Thana Bansiharee and from Kordaho runs eastward, excluding Pergunna Kordaho, across the middle of Thana Gangarampoor, through Patiram, excluding Pergunna Sontosh, and then finally turns northwards towards Thakoorgaon, including the whole of the Thanas Chintamon, Rajarampoor, Peergunj, and Beergunj. The northern and central part of the estate was in Akbar's Sarkar Panikot, the western in Sarkar Tajpoor, and Bongshiharee and part of Gangarampoor in Sarkar Jonotabad. Besides the lands within the boundary, much of the northern part of the district of Maldah including the old city of that name, belonged to the estate.

In the time of Sookdeb, or of his father, the family of Khetlal became extinct, and its estates were divided, seven-sixteenths coming to Sookdeb Roy, whose father and grandfather may have inherited the office of Dewan from their ancestor, and the remaining nine-sixteenths falling to another officer, who

founded the family of Bordonkootee or Idrakpoor, still in existence. The lands thus added to the estate are in Sarkar Ghoraghat and comprise the thanas of Nawabganj and Ghoraghat, and in Bogra the thanas Khetlal, Sheebgunj, Panchbibee, Bodolgachee, and Adamdighee, and perhaps more. Buchanan says that Pergunna Khatta in Bodolgachee was conquered and divided by the Rajas of Natore and Dinagepoor in Ramnath's time; and that Pargunna Khangor in Panchbibee was a joint acquisition with the Jehangirpoor family in Ramnath's time; but Raja Gobindonath makes them part of Sookdeb's property. The Zemindars of Dinagepoor and Idrakpoor in place of dividing the lands, each retained a share in every village, which caused much inconvenience when in after days the one estate was under the Collectorate of Dinagepoor, while the other was under Rungpoor. Sookdeb Roy died A. D. 1677. It is said that the extent of his possessions induced the Mohammedans to bestow upon him the title of Raja, but the sunnud is no longer in existence. Nothing is known of his personal character, or of his history; he perpetuated his name by digging the tank of Sookhsagor or the 'Sea of Pleasure'."

Sukdeb left three sons, of whom the eldest died young, the second reigned for five years, from A. D. 1677—1682, and was succeeded by the youngest, Prānnāth, who reigned for forty years. A sanad, dated A. D. 1679, granted by Azim-ud-din Mahmud in the reign of the Emperor Alamgīr, is still preserved in the Rājbāri, in which the succession of some one to Sukdeb's property is recorded. Unfortunately the name of this successor is obliterated.

The ousting of the Āfghāns from Bengal appears to have brought that province little closer to the throne of Delhi than it was under its former governors. The rule of the Mughal viceroys was a repetition of that of their predecessors, so far as their relations with the Emperor were concerned. The constant bickering that went on with the central power distracted their attention from their Hindu subjects, and the Rājā of Dinājpur was permitted to rule undisturbed over some three-quarters of a million of people, on condition of paying a certain portion of his revenues to the Subāhdār of Bengal.

Prānnāth reigned for forty years and is credited with having made considerable additions to his ancestral property. He appears to have been a powerful and unscrupulous prince, and the additions referred to were probably acquired by force of arms. It is hard at this distance of time to ascertain exactly what these lands were, but tradition says that besides Parganā Māligāon forming the eastern half of thānā Bansihāri, and a considerable area in Māldā, he absorbed some 12 small estates which were surrounded by the Rāj property. He has commemorated his name in various parts of the district. Twelve miles south of Dinājpur town on the Murshidābād road is a fine tank named Prānsāgar, or the "Sea of Life" which he constructed. This is still in a perfect state of preservation, and probably through the

interest taken by the family in their illustrious ancestor, it has been kept free of the weeds and jungle, which spoil the appearance of many of the old tanks in the district. Twelve miles north of the town on the Darjeeling road is the temple of Kāntānagar, built, though not finished, by this prince. It is picturesquely situated on the banks of the Dhepā, and is a fine specimen of the art of the time, being decorated all over with terra-cotta reliefs. In the course of centuries this temple fell into considerable disrepair and was greatly damaged by the 1897 earthquake. It is now in process of restoration by the present Mahārājā Girijānāth Roy Bāhādur. Prānnāth's favourite country seat is said to have been at Prānnagar, on the road between Birganj and Thākurgāon, but the remains of the original buildings have almost disappeared.

During the reign of Prānnāth Mir Jāfir became Subāhdār of Bengal and signalised his rule by making a new settlement of the province. This superseded that of Todarmal made in the reign of the Emperor Ākbār. This new settlement divided the province into Chaklās, and the principal Hindu subjects of the viceroy become Chaklādārs, and were made responsible for the collection of the revenue. The most important of these zamindārs adopted the title of Rājā, and many of them retain it to this day. Having no son, Prānnāth adopted a young relative named Rāmnāth, who on his succession to the *gadi* paid a succession fee of Rs. 4,21,450 to the Subāhdār of Bengal. This prince is popularly supposed to have been even more powerful and unscrupulous than his predecessor, and to have been in addition a warrior of considerable personal prowess. His mail shirt and spear were preserved in the Rājbāri down to a late period. He seems further to have been a *persona grata* with the Subāhdār of Bengal who granted him three sanads, conferring on him additional estates in thānās Patirām, Patnitolā and Gangārāmpur. Rāmnāth conquered and dispossessed the zamindār of Gobindnagar, near the present village of Thākurgāon, employing a Brahmin to steal his protecting deity or family idol Gobinda, and thus causing his downfall. The conqueror subsequently constructed a canal connecting Gobindnagar on the Tāngan with Prānnagar near the Punarbhābā for the purpose of taking the idol backwards and forwards between the two places. This canal is still in existence and is called the Rāmdānrā. Tradition says that in the reign of Rāmnāth, Saiyid Muhammad Khān, Nāzim of Rangpur, stormed and plundered the Rājbāri, near the town of Dināj pur, but whether the former drove him out, or came to terms with him, is not stated. In Stewart's *History of Bengal*, this Nāzim of Rangpur is called Saiyid Ahmed, and this incident is thus described: "About this period Sayid Ahmed, the second son of Hajy Ahmed, who upon the succession of Shujaa Adeen Khan had been appointed Foujadar of Rangpur, and who is accused of having ruled that district with great oppression, having procured from Moorshudabad a considerable army, invaded Dinagepore and Couch Beyhar, and after compelling the Rajas to take refuge in

the woods and mountains, got possession of those countries, together with the immense treasures which the Rajas and their ancestors had amassed." It is doubtful whether this catastrophe was so serious as Stewart makes out, as the Dinājpur Rāj is generally supposed to have attained its greatest splendour under Rāmnāth, who reigned for a long time after this. After the retirement of the invaders, Rāmnāth reconstructed the Rājbāri, and also dug the famous Rāmsāgar tank 4 miles south of the town on the Murshidābād road. This, like the Prānsāgar tank, is still well preserved, and with its fine embankments, dotted with palm-trees, is one of the most picturesque spots in the district. Rāmnagar, a part of Dinājpur town, and Rājārāmpur, where he built a temple to Kāli, are called after Rāmnāth. Rājā Rāmnāth died in A.D. 1760, and was succeeded by his son Baidyanāth. The latter appears to have had some dispute with his other brothers about the succession to the property, as a manuscript signed by Muhammad Jāfir Khān, Subādār of Bengal, is still preserved, in which Baidyanāth is declared the rightful heir of his father. Baidyanāth is said to have been of a quiet disposition and rather weak-minded, and to have allowed the Brahmins to get rather the upper hand of him.

In A. D. 1765, the British obtained the Diwāni of Bengal, with the right of collecting the revenues, and in A. D. 1772 or thereabouts an English collector or chief of the revenue was appointed to the zamindāri of Dinājpur. It is probable that the strictness with which the collection of the revenue was henceforth made, under the new regimé, is accountable for the decline in prosperity of the family, which began about this time. The Collectorate records do not begin till A. D. 1786, and the first Collector, Mr. Marriott, appears to have only been a Collector in the more limited sense of being responsible for the payment of the Government revenue. Mr. Redfern and Mr. Vansittart, who were appointed subsequently for short periods, were probably in the same position. Mr. Hatch, who was appointed Managing Collector of the Dinājpur Raj in 1786, and was vested with judicial powers and jurisdiction over the greater part of the area covered by the present districts of Dinājpur, Māldā, and Bogra, was the first District Officer in the modern sense of the term. From this time on we have a regular record of the administration of the district.

The British.

In A. D. 1780, Rājā Baidyanāth died without an heir, and his widow Rāni Saraswati adopted a young boy named Rādhānāth, and, on payment of a succession fee of 730 mohars, obtained from the British a sanad declaring Rādhānath successor to Baidyanāth. This sanad detailed the lands composing the estate, and was signed by Warren Hastings. During the minority of Rājā Rādhānāth the estates were managed first by Rājā Devi Singh of Dilwārpur, in Murshidābād, and afterwards by one Jānaki Rām Singh, brother of the Rāni Saraswati. The latter kept great state in the Rājbāri, but failing to understand the strictness of the

British revenue system fell into arrears with his payments, and was removed by orders of the Board of Revenue. In A. D. 1787 Rām Kānta Ray, a relative of the family, was installed as manager. He seems to have discharged his duties well, but had little influence with the young Rājā, whom his adoptive mother, incensed at the treatment meted out to her brother, Jānaki Rām, did all in her power to alienate from the English.

Westmacott comments thus on this attitude of the Rāni: "The Ranee's feelings of hostility against the British rule are pardonable. Her husband for 20 years had reigned almost as an independent prince, and after his death her brother Janokee Ram had maintained an equal state. Suddenly her brother was called upon to pay his revenue with a punctuality never known before, and on default was sent in custody to Calcutta, and she never saw him again. The collections of the estate were taken entirely out of the hands of the family, and even the expenses of repairs of the Rajbaree and the monthly wages of the servants, were defrayed by Government orders without reference to her wishes. The herd of buffaloes belonging to the Rajbaree was sent to the uncultivated part of the district as a public nuisance, and many of the consecrated cattle were sold. The Ranee was not even allowed to take care of her adopted son, 9 or 10 years old, but he was made over for education to the manager, Ram Kanto Roy, for whom she had a strong personal aversion. At the same time the income of the zamindaree was being decreased by the abolition of all the illegal taxes and cesses which the Rajas had collected as long as she could remember and by the determination of Government that the family charities were to be paid out of the privy purse and not out of the Imperial revenue as heretofore. She was naturally in no temper to look on Mr. Hatch's reforms as beneficial or to acquiesce in the action of Government."

In A. D. 1792, Rājā Rādhānath was placed in charge of his estate, a year or so after the conclusion of the decennial settlement. For a year things went smoothly, but in A. D. 1793, when Mr. Hatch was promoted to the Board of Revenue, and Mr. Eliot succeeded him, the Rājā adopted as his advisers the creatures of the former manager, Jānaki Rām, and soon got the estate into difficulties. His mismanagement was carried so far that in 1794 his seal was seized and locked up in the Collector's treasury, and Rām Kānta Ray was again appointed manager. The Rājā appears to have been reinstated about A. D. 1796, and lost no time in pursuing his former course of action. In A.D. 1797 arrears of revenue having accrued to the extent of some 70,000 rupees, by order of the Board of Revenue part of the estate was sold. In the following years, as the revenue continued to be in arrears, further sales were effected, and the affairs of the estate went from bad to worse. The Rājā struggled to save his estates by raising money on mortgages, (one of his principal creditors being Rām Kānta Ray,) and buying back parts of his estate under assumed names. His own

wife Rāni Tripurā Sundari and the old Rāni Saraswati also purchased lands to a considerable extent. By the close of A. D. 1800 almost the whole estate had been alienated, and the Rājā was virtually a prisoner in his own house, as his creditors were threatening to seize his person and have him imprisoned. Rājā Rādhānāth died in A. D. 1801 at the early age of 24. Opinions may differ as to the expediency of breaking up this large and ancient estate, but there can be no question that the policy of Government, however legal, was unduly harsh. The district of Dinājpur was remote from such great centres as Calcutta, Murshidābād, Pātnā, and Dāccā, and this, combined with the fact that it had an evil reputation for unhealthiness, precluded wealthy purchasers from bidding for the estate lands. As a consequence, the lots into which the property had been divided fetched much less than their real value, some of them scarcely bringing in so much as the amount of their annual revenue. The rule of selling to the highest bidder was strictly complied with, and the principal purchasers were the estate servants, the amlās of Government, and local zamindārs and merchants. It might be urged in defence of the policy pursued that such a large possession as that of the Rājā of Dinājpur was a standing menace to Government, and that the breaking of it up was essential to the peaceful administration of the district, but there is nothing to show that such was actually the feeling of the British authorities.

With the breaking up of the Dinājpur Rāj the history of the district ceases to be of interest to the outside public. The old saying that "happy is the country that has no history" may fairly be applied to Dinājpur, in whch no important events of a political nature have occurred to disturb the even tenor of administrative and material development. The gradual rise in importance of agriculture, the progress of education, the development of the means of communication, and the improvement of the various branches of administration, are described in their appropriate chapters. But before bringing this chapter to a close, a few events, not treated of elsewhere, may be briefly mentioned.

On the death of Rājā Rādhānāth in 1801, his widow adopted a child named Govindanāth, who took possession of the remnant of the family estates in 1817. This Rājā appears to have been a capable man and did a great deal to restore order in the affairs of the family and to regain some of its lost possessions. On his death in 1841, his eldest son having predeceased him, he was succeeded by his youngest son Tāraknāth, who died childless in 1865, leaving the property to his widow Rāni Shyām Mohini. The latter adopted a son named Girijānāth who is the present Mahārājā. In 1874, the year of the great famine, the Rāni earned the gratitude of Government by her generous conributions towards the relief of distress and received the title of

Mahārāni in recognition of her services. Shortly after his accession to the *gadi* the title of Mahārājā was conferred upon her adopted son. The family claim that this is no new honour, but merely the revival of the title given by the Emperor of Delhi to Rājā Baidyanāth shortly before the British occupation. For some reason, which is rather hard to explain, the title of Mahārājā Bahādur fell into disuse after the British occupation and in the old records in the Collectorate the zamindār is invariably referred to as the Rājā simply. It is said that after the mutiny of 1857, during which the Rājā remained loyal to Government, the Governor-General Lord Lawrence, with a view to reviving the old titles asked to see the *farmāns* which had been granted to the family in Muhammadan times. These were accordingly despatched to Calcutta by boat in charge of the principal agent of the estate, but near Navadwip on the Ganges the boat was overtaken by a violent storm and foundered with all on board. The *farmāns* being all lost it was no longer possible to prove the Rājā's claim to the higher title and the matter was allowed to drop. In 1906, just after the partition of Bengal, the further title of Bahādur was bestowed upon the Mahārājā, for his loyal support of Government at a trying crisis. The privilege of maintaining a force of 100 armed retainers was also granted at the same time. The estate of the present Mahārājā, though woefully diminished as compared with those of his ancestors, is still the largest in the district, and pays an annual revenue of about Rs. 1,75,000 on a gross rental of about Rs. 3,50,000.

In the early part of the last century there were many indigo factories in the district, but the business does not seem to have ever been a very paying one, and the factories have long since disappeared, though the remains of old vats may still be seen here and there buried in jungle. The planters did not usually grow their own indigo, but got the raiyats to grow it for them in consideration of advances made to them for the purpose. The growing of indigo never became popular with the cultivators, as the landlords were against it and put an end to all chances of profit by exacting an extra heavy rent for land on which indigo was grown. The indigo-planters were unpopular with both landlords and raiyats, the former alleging that they were quarrelsome and overbearing in their manners and fond of interfering between themselves and their raiyats, while the latter accused them of compelling them to grow indigo against their will and complained that the factory amlās cheated when measuring land and weighing the crop. The planters retorted by saying that the reason for their unpopularity with the zamindārs was that the presence of members of the dominant race on their estates affected the prestige of these latter with the cultivators and prevented them from resorting so freely to the illegal extortions of which they were so fond. It is impossible to judge, at this distance of time, what the rights of the matter were, but it seems

probable that the presence in the district of a body of Europeans who were not amenable, in virtue of their nationality, to the laws of the Company, must have hampered the district authorities considerably. The names of two of the earliest indigo-planters have come down to us. These were Mr. Carey and Mr. Thomas who in 1793 established factories at Madnābati and Mahipāldighi, respectively, with funds furnished by a Mr. Udny, an indigo-planter of Māldā. Both the first-mentioned gentlemen were Baptist Missionaries and seem to have combined planting and indigo manufacture with mission work. Mr. Thomas was also a medical man, while Mr. Carey was something of botanist and expert in agriculture. The latter established at Madnābati, a little place on the Tāngān river in Banshihāri thānā, what is said to have been the first printing press in Bengal and edited a religious journal from there. He also translated the Bible into Bengali. In 1801 the missionaries converted and baptized a Mr. Fernandez, a gentleman of Portuguese extraction and independent means, who from that time on till his death in 1833 was the mainstay of missionary work in Dinājpur. None of these gentlemen appear to have been attached to any society, but they nevertheless raised a considerable native church, the charge of which, after Mr. Fernandez' death, was taken over by the London Baptist Mission, whose representatives are still working here.

The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 left the district happily undisturbed. There is an amusing story of how a regiment of rebel cavalry advancing from the Jalpaiguri direction as far as Birganj, intent on looting the Dinājpur treasury, asked their way from some simple-looking yokels on the road. These directed them how to get to Dinājpur, but added that there was a European regiment stationed there, which had got wind of their coming and was advancing to attack them. Whereupon the sowārs, thinking discretion the better part of valour, sheered off towards Māldā and were no more heard of. The story of the villagers was a fairy tale, as there were no troops at Dinājpur at the time.

CHAPTER III.

THE PEOPLE.

GROWTH OF THE POPULATION.

THE first census was taken in 1872 and showed a population of 1,501,924 souls. The area of the district was then 4,126 square miles. This area has since been reduced to 3,946 square miles, and the population of the present district in 1872 is ascertained to have been 1,430,096 persons. If we are to believe Dr. Buchanan Hamilton, who held a survey of the district in 1808, the population was much greater in his day. Dinājpur then included two thānās since transferred to Māldā, and three thānās now belonging to Bogrā, and had a total area of 5,374 square miles. Buchanan Hamilton estimated the population at 3 million souls. In 1872 the population of this or a very similar tract was found to be 1,747,635, a very considerable decrease. Buchanan Hamilton's estimate was, of course, a very rough one, and not based on any proper census, and he probably greatly miscalculated the population. At the same time, it is quite possible that the population of the district really was much greater in those days.

Mr. Beverley, the Census Commissioner of 1872, says: "Without a fuller knowledge of the history of this district, I am not prepared to condemn Buchanan's estimate as having been very wide of the mark in his time. It is quite possible that the physical character of the district may have so changed in late years as materially to affect the density of the population. Gour is not the only city in this part of the country whose ruins bear melancholy witness to its ancient grandeur."

There is a vague tradition of a terrible pestilence which attacked the district early in the last century and swept off vast numbers of the inhabitants. The exact nature of this pestilence is not known but it is not impossible that it may have been akin to the kālā-āzār which devastated Assam within recent times. Indeed so great an authority as Major Rogers holds that this disease originated in the Dinājpur and Rangpur districts though he fixes a later period for its first appearance. In this, however, he may have been mistaken.

In 1863 Major Sherwill, the Revenue Surveyor, gave the area of the district as 4,586 square miles, and estimated the population at a little over a million. This estimate was probably as cautious as Buchanan Hamilton's was optimistic. At the census of 1881 it was found that the population was practically stationary, having advanced only to 1,514,346 or, taking the present district area, to 1,442,518, an increase of ·86 per cent. Mr. Bourdillon, the Census Commissioner,

remarked: "Dinagepore has made no progress at all during the last nine years, for the advance of the population has been only ·82 per cent., which would be much more than accounted for by better enumeration. This pitiable result is due only to the ravages of malarious fever, for which this district has as evil a reputation as its neighbour Rungpore. In 1872 the reported deaths from fever in Dinagepore were higher than in any other district of the Division. The four following years showed little improvement, and in 1876 the fever mortality was 22·05 per mille of the whole population. In 1877, which a general concensus of opinion declares to have been the most unhealthy year in this district within living memory, this rate rose to 24·37 and 30·06, and over 36,000 deaths were reported from this cause alone. Out of 17 adult Europeans 15 had to leave the district during the year, broken by repeated attacks of fever, and official business could hardly be carried on. This terrible mortality drew renewed attention to the insanitary condition of the district, and a Committee was appointed to report on the causes of this great unhealthiness, and to suggest means for improving the health of the station. The investigations of the Committee demonstrated the existence of a terrible amount of constant sickness and a very high death rate. An examination of nearly 1,000 individuals showed that nearly 75 per cent. of the inhabitants were in bad health, while 53 per cent. had marked enlargement of the spleen. It so happened that this district was at the time that in which death registration was best carried out in all Bengal; and it was found that the death rate in the Municipality was 42 per mille, nearly double the death rate of London, while the police died at the rate of 46, and the prisoners in jail at the rate of 74·6 per mille per annum." In the census of 1891 a slight though appreciable increase of population is noticeable, the number of persons in the district then amounting to 1,482,570, or 2·7 per cent. more than in 1881. It is probable that this was due to a gradual increase in prosperity and to the recovery of the district to some extent from the exceptionally unhealthy years which preceded the census of 1881. The immigration from the Sāntāl Parganās, which began to be noticeable during this decade, is also responsible for part of the increase.

The rate of increase in population became still more rapid and the census of 1901 showed a population of 1,567,080, or an increase of 5·3 per cent. while in 1911 the population rose to 1,687,863 or a further increase of 7·72 per cent. Immigration from the west accounted for a large proportion of this. This immigration principally affected the southern thānās which were formerly sparsely populated and full of waste lands and jungle. "About 10 years ago," says Mr. Gait, the Census Commissioner of 1901, "it occurred to the Manager of a Government estate that the waste land might be reclaimed, if Sāntāls were imported and settled there. The experiment was made, and proved such a

success that the influx has continued ever since. The total number of Sāntāls in the district now amounts to 74,101. Their lead has been followed by a few Mundās and Orāons from Rānchi. The zamindārs welcomed the advent of these hardy pioneers, but they do not usually take any active steps to import them, as they are of a roving disposition, and readily move on to fresh clearances on other estates. Outside the Bārind the Sāntāls seem averse to settling, and the increase in the population is consequently smaller." This Sāntāl immigration is going on steadily, and their numbers have now risen to 109,620, and these people are rapidly reclaiming all the waste lands in the district, though the greater number of them are still to be found in the Bārind tracts.

The steady decrease in the population of the Rānisankail thānā since 1872 may perhaps be explained by the fact that this part of the district is generally admitted to be the most unhealthy, and to show the highest mortality from malarial fever. Between 1872 and 1891 the population of the Kotwāli and Birganj thānās showed a decrease, but the last two censuses indicate that the causes for this decrease, whatever they were, have ceased to operate. The most noticeable advance in population, during the twenty years ending 1911, occurred in the thānās of Patirām, Patnitolā, and Kāliyāganj, which show an increase of 31,275, 31,329, and 15,914 respectively. The increase in the first of these is explained by Sāntāl immigration. This cause was operative in the case of the second also, though to a less extent. The increase noticeable in Kāliyāganj is hard to explain, if, as the Census Commissioner of 1901 argued, the railway has had no influence on the population of the localities through which it runs.

The principal statistics of the census of 1911 are reproduced below:—

Subdivision.	Area in sq. miles.	Number of		Population in 1911.	Population per sq. mile.	Percentage of variation in population between 1901 and 1911.
		Towns.	Villages.			
Sadar Subdivision ..	1,598	1	3,902	694,954	435	9·01
Bālurghāt ...	1,177	...	2,776	447,343	380	15·27
Thākurgāon ...	1,171	...	2,980	545,566	466	·46
District Total ...	3,946	1	9,658	1,687,863	428	7·72

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS. Density of population.

Generally speaking, with the exception of the portion covered by rivers and *bils*, almost the whole area of Dinjāpur district is culturable, belonging as it does to the Gangetic alluvium and being remarkably free from hills and stony or otherwise unculturable land. The population per square mile is nevertheless far from dense, being only 428 for the whole district. The

reason for this is undoubtedly malarial fever, which not only keeps down the indigenous population, but acts as a check on immigration. As one might naturally expect, the population, in the more settled portions of the district, is denser than in the more jungly tracts. For instance, in the Kotwāli thānā, which contains the headquarters station, the density is 553 persons to the square mile, while in the Porshā thānā, which comprises the largest area of jungle, it is only 315. The Thākurgāon thānā, containing the headquarters of that Subdivision, comes next in respect of population to the Kotwāli, with 507 persons per square mile, in spite of a slight decrease from the density of 516 recorded in 1901. The sparseness of the population in the Nawābganj and Gangarāmpur thānās, which show a density of 371 and 365 to the square mile respectively, is explained, as in the case of Porshā, by the comparatively unsettled state of these thānās.

Migration. The district is notable for the very small number of its inhabitants who leave it, while the number of immigrants it receives is very great. The large influx of immigrants from the Sāntāl Parganās and the Chotā Nāgpur plateau to the Bārind, and other sparsely populated portions of the district, which has occurred in recent years, has already been described. Besides these aboriginal tribes we find a fair number of permanent settlers, who have come from Murshidābād, Nadiā, Behār and the Central Provinces, and have settled down as cultivators or domestic servants, but the great majority of these foreigners are of the periodic type, and come in the cold weather in search of employment as agricultural labourers or earth-workers, returning to their homes in the spring. Foreigners of the better class, such as Marwāri merchants, up-country carpenters, masons and other artisans, etc., are fairly numerous. Apart from what might be called foreign immigration the ebb and flow of population between Dinājpur and the neighbouring Bengali-speaking districts is not great. In the case of Jalpāiguri this is about equal, while in the case of Rangpur the advantage is with Dinājpur. The fact that at the 1901 census 132,003 persons born outside the district were enumerated in it, as compared with 17,193 persons born in the district who were enumerated elsewhere, illustrates the great excess of immigration over emigration.

Towns and villages. The population of Dinājpur is almost entirely rural. There is only one town, Dinājpur, worthy of the name, containing 15,945 inhabitants. The rural population amounts to 1,671,918 souls inhabiting 9,658 villages. For census purposes the village has been taken to mean a residential village, *i.e.*, a collection of houses bearing a separate name with its dependent hamlets. The hamlet usually consists of scattered homesteads or *bāris*, each homestead containing besides the actual buildings a certain area of garden and cultivated land, the whole surrounded by a fence and sometimes by a ditch also. It is rarely that any attempt is made to surround the hamlet as a whole by a fence or ditch as is done in some

parts of India, though some of the groups of houses inhabited by foreign settlers approximate to this type. The homesteads of which a hamlet is composed are often very scattered and separated from each other by cultivated land and jungle. The village officials, such as they are, are the *patwāri*, or zamindār's agent, in charge of a group of villages, the *mandal*, or so-called headman, who is generally a prominent person in the village, whose duty it is to assist the patwāri, but who is seldom a real headman, and the village *panchāyats* and *chaukidārs* appointed under the Chaukidāri Act. Besides these there is generally a group of elders or *pradhāns* in each village, though nowadays they have no particular functions and comparatively little influence. The *diwaniā* or village tout or sea-lawyer can scarcely be called an official, but he is nevertheless to be found in every village of any importance, and frequently exercises more influence than the zamindār himself.

Sex.

Dinājpur, in common with nearly all the Eastern Bengal districts, shows an excess of males over females, there being over 1,115 of the former to every 1,000 of the latter.

Language.

The vast majority of the population of this district speak Bengali, which, in the case of the more respectable classes, differs little from that spoken in Bengal proper. The lower orders, especially those of Paliyā origin, speak a rather unintelligible Bengali patois, which is characterised by contraction of words, and by the use of a large number of Urdu and Hindi words, and some words of Dravidian origin. The settlers from the Sāntāl Parganās and Chotā Nāgpur are commonly bilingual, speaking both their own language and Bengali.

RACES.

There is little doubt that the bulk of the population of the Dinājpur district originally belonged to the Rājbansi race, which is commonly confounded with the Koch. The description of this tribe, given by Mr. E. A. Gait in his Census Report of Bengal, 1901, may appropriotely be quoted here :—"The Rajbansis of North Bengal wished to be styled Bhanga or Bratya Kshattriyas, and to be classed amongst the twice-born castes. They tell various stories of their origin, the favourite one being the well-worn legend that their ancestors were the descendants of Kshattriyas who discarded their sacred threads when fleeing from the wrath of Parasurama.* Another story is that they are descended from Rājā Baskara Varman, who was related to many Kshattriya families and so must himself have been of the same caste. These legends may at once be rejected, and even if they had some substratum of truth, which does not appear to be the case, they would not affect the estimation in which the caste is held at the present day. At the same time, the enquiries which I have caused to be made seem to show that there is a good foundation for the assertion

*King of Kāmārupā in 640 A. D

of the Rajbansis of Rangpur that they have no connection with the Koches, and that the two communities spring from entirely different sources. Though in some places there has been considerable racial inter-mixture, the Rajbansis appear to be a Dravidian tribe, allied, it may be, to the Tiyars, who often call themselves Rajbansi in the districts south of Rangpur, as far as Nadia and Jessore, and they probably owned the name long before the Mongoloid Koch kings rose to power. When the latter turned to Hinduism they assumed the caste name of the most numerous Hinduised community in their neighbourhood, and, owing to the loose organisation of the original Rajbansis, there was a considerable inter-mingling of the two races while the Koch kings ruled, especially towards the north and north-east where they were most numerous. In Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and in Goalpara in Assam, the persons now known as Rajbansi are either pure Koches who, though dark, have a distinctly Mongoloid physiognomy, or else a mixed breed, in which the Koch element usually preponderates. Further away, the Koches did not so readily abandon their old religion and their tribal name, and the original Rajbansis were less willing to mix with them. In Rangpur we find Rajbansis and Koches inhabiting the same villages, but remaining as perfectly distinct communities, with very different physical characteristics. The religion also is different. The Koch worships Siva and eats pork, while the Rajbansi is usually a Vaishanava and eschews unclean food. The Kamrupi Brahman serves Rajbansi and Koch alike, but the Maithil Brahmans, who sometimes minister to the Rajbansis, will have nothing to say to the Koches, and the Napit, though he shaves them, does so with some reluctance. The Koches sometimes serve as palki-bearers but the Rajbansis never do so." In 1911 persons of admittedly Rajbansi origin were found to form 26 per cent. of the population of the Dinājpur district, exclusive of those of similar descent who had become converts to Muhammadanism, or who in course of time had managed to obtain admittance into more orthodox Hindu castes. The great majority of Muhammadans in the district are descended from this tribe with some admixture of Āfghān and Moghal blood. The better class Muhammadan families claim to be and no doubt, in many cases, are descended from Āfghān or Moghal soldiers or officials. Foreign aboriginal races who have settled in the district are the Sāntāls from the Sāntāl Parganās, under which name a sprinkling of Mundās and Orāons from Chotā Nāgpur are included, and a number of low-caste settlers who have drifted across the border from Purneā and other Behār districts. The Aryan element is represented by a number of better class Hindu families, mostly of foreign origin. To go back to early times we hear of Adisur, the founder of the Sen dynasty, introducing several Brahman families from Kanouj and these doubtless brought with them many disciples. Many Hindus followed the Muhammadan invaders, Āfghān and

Moghal, as soldiers and traders and obtained posts as ministerial officers and clerks under their rule. The superior intelligence of these foreigners gave then an advantage over the slower witted aborigines in the race for wealth and power, and it is a noteworthy fact, in a district with such a large Muhammadan population, that the zamindārs almost to a man are Hindus, while many of them claim a foreign origin.

RELIGIONS.

In the Dinājpur district 824,345 persons, or 48·8 per cent. of the total population, are followers of Islam, 759,309. or 44·9 per cent., including Hinduised and semi-Hinduised aboriginal tribes, profess Hinduism, and 102,031, or 6·0 per cent. are animists. Besides these there are 1,964 Christians, and a few Jāins. Generally speaking, Hindus and Muhammadans are fairly evenly distributed throughout the district, and there is nowhere any very marked preponderance of one of these communities over the other, except in Kāliyāganj and Rāiganj thānās, in which the Hindus and Pārbatipur, Porsā and Nawābganj thānās, in which the Muhammadans predominate. Animists are found in the greatest numbers in the Patirām, Nawābganj, Gangārāmpur and Phulbāri thānās, where the Sāntāls chiefly congregate. The greatest number of Christians is to be found in Patirām thānā, where there are a fair number of Sāntāl converts.

Muhammadans.

The Muhammadans of Dinājpur are chiefly the descendants of Rajbansis converted by force to Islam or who adopted that religion during the days of Muhammadan rule from motives of policy. Tradition says that Jālāl-ud-dīn, ruler of Gaur about A.D. 1420, who was himself a converted Hindu, forcibly proselytised all the inhabitants of the district, except those who escaped into the neighbouring kingdom of Kāmārupā, and there is no doubt that throughout the Muhammadan period the *pirs*, or reglious devotees, who exercised such influence with their rulers, made it their business to bring over to their own religion as many as possible of the people amongst whom they lived. The above would account for nearly half the inhabitants being Musulmān by religion, even were we to overlook the fact that the foreign troops, who for so many centuries garrisoned and policed the country, and who probably in most cases did not bring their women with them, must have introduced a considerable strain of Pathān and Moghal blood. Traces of this are visible in the thin, high-nosed features of many of the cultivators, whilst in others the broad flattish face and squat build betrays the aborigine. The Muhammadan cultivators generally claim the title of Sheikh, though the name that they perhaps more frequently go by is Nasya, meaning one whose original religion has been destroyed, *i.e.*, a convert. In this connection the census report of 1901 may be quoted: "Not only do new converts often call themselves Shekh, but it is also the title assumed by well-to-do members of the various functional groups when desirous of hiding their humble origin and entering the Ashraf class. Amongst the uneducated the greatest ignorance

prevails regarding the meaning of this and kindred terms, and the idea that all Muhammadans must necessarily belong to one or other of the four classes, Shekh, Saiad, Moghal, and Pathan, is quite as deep-rooted as the belief amongst Hindus in their four-fold division into Brahmans, Kshattriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras. In Dinājpur it is reported that the common people hold that all priests are Saiads; the police and peons, Pathans; woollen cloth-dealers Moghals; and cultivators Shekhs." In the same report Mr. Gait makes some interesting comments on the religious observances of the Bengal Muhammadans. From these some extracts more particularly applicable to the Dinājpur district may be quoted: "The unreformed Muhammadans of the lower and uneducated classes are deeply infected with Hindu superstitions and their knowledge of the faith they profess seldom extends beyond the three cardinal doctrines of the Unity of God, the mission of Muhammad, and the truth of the Koran, and they have a very faint idea of the differences between their religion and that of the Hindus...............Before the recent crusade against idolatry it was the regular practice of low class Muhammadans to join in the Durga Puja and other Hindu religious festivals, and although they have been purged of many superstitions many still remain. In particular they are very careful about omens and auspicious days. Dates for weddings are often fixed after consulting a Hindu astrologer, bamboos are not cut, nor the building of new houses commenced, on certain days of the week, and journeys are often undertaken only after referring to the Hindu almanac to see if the proposed day is auspicious. When disease is prevalent Sitala and Rakshya Kali are worshipped..............Apart from Hindu superstitions there are certain forms of worship common amongst Muhammadans which are not based on the Koran. The most common of these is the adoration of departed *pirs*. It should be explained that the priesthood of Islam is two-fold. The law and the dogmas are expounded by the Mullah or learned teacher; the spiritual submission to, and communion with, the deity, is inculcated by the *pir* or spiritual guide...........When a holy *pir* departs from this life, he is popularly believed to be still present in spirit, and to offer his daily prayers at Mecca or Medina, and his *dargah* or tomb becomes a place of pilgrimage to which persons resort for the cure of disease, or the exorcism of evil spirits, or to obtain the fulfilment of some cherished wish, such as the birth of a child, or success in pending litigation. The educated stoutly deny that *pirs* are worshipped, and say that they are merely asked to intercede with God, but amongst the lower classes it is very doubtful if this distinction is clearly recognised, even if it actually exists." Of recent years what might be described as a Muhammadan revival, under the auspices of itinerant mullahs, has been going on. These travel about the country and preach against idolatry and all practices not sanctioned by the Korān. The result has been that a consider-

able section have joined what is locally called the community of Nāyā Musulmāns. The members of this sect, if it may be so called, are strict in their religious observances, avoid participation in Hindu religious festivals, and the extravagance in connection with marriages and other ceremonies so general amongst the Hindus and degenerate Musulmāns, while the better classes amongst them are particular in the matter of the seclusion of their women. In dress they affect the cloth worn like a skirt rather than the *dhoti* worn by the ordinary Muhammadans of the district.

Fakirs of Bāliyādighi.

Mauza Bāliyādighi, in the police outpost of Hemtābād has, since the time of Shāh Shujā, been the home of a curious sect of *fakirs*, whose religious practices are a sort of compromise between Muhammadanism and Hindu Jogism. It is said that at one time a Hindu Rājā named Bāliyā lived at this spot, and that the founder of the sect, a *fakir* named Shāh Sultān Hasan Mariā Burahna, came and demanded an audience. This being refused he asked for as much land as he could cover with the skin he used for sitting on. His request, which seemed a modest one, was granted, whereupon the skin began to spread till it reached the Rājā's palace. The latter, terrified at the portent, drowned himself in the palace tank or *dighi*, and the *fakir* got possession of the Rājā's estates, which his successors retained till quite recently, when the father of the present *fakir*, embarking on litigation, lost them. Maulavi Abdul Wāli, writing in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1903, thus describes the sect: "The beliefs and practices of these *fakirs* are in many ways anti-Islamic. They grow long hair on their head,...............put on coloured cloths, wear a small piece of cloth instead of breeches called *kofni* and use shackles of iron and long iron tongs. They sit with thick sticks placed as a support under their arms. They never take food touched by other persons, and subsist mainly on unboiled rice, clarified butter and salt. They do not eat fish or meat...... ....until recent years they lived a life of celibacy............ In their tours, they carried the fish standard, called *mahi-o-muratib*, and were accompanied by a large retinue. Their title is Burahna or nude; till recently they wore only one simple piece of cloth and even this was probably not worn in earlier times"

Hindus.

Out of 759,309 Hindus in the district no less than 442,990 are of aboriginal descent, and belong to the Rājbansi race. Of the remainder many are the descendants of clerks and traders who followed the fortunes of the Āfghāns, the Moghals, and finally the English. Of these the earlier arrivals were chiefly up-country men or from Behār, the later arrivals came mostly from Bengal proper. Nowadays most of the wealthy traders, the principal landholders, and the pleaders and mukhteārs are Hindus and, generally speaking, the latter occupy a somewhat higher social position in the district than the Muhammadans. In manners

and customs they do not differ very much from the Hindus of Bengal proper, though inferior to the latter in intelligence and education, and regarded by them with some contempt as provincials.

Christians.

With the exception of a few officials and railway employees there are no European residents in the district. The Christian population consists mostly of Sāntāl converts, the majority of whom live in the Patirām thānā. The Christians of mixed descent are Roman Catholics, while those of purely Indian origin are Baptists.

Animists.

Of the Sāntāl, Orāon and Mundā settlers from the Sāntāl Parganās and the Chotā Nāgpur plateau, a large percentage are animists; so also are some of the Tāntis or weavers. In the census of 1911 102,031 persons were returned as professing this religion, if religion it can be called. Mr. Gait in his Assam Census Report of 1891 describes the salient features of animism as follows: "There is a vague but very general belief in some one omnipotent being, who is well disposed towards men, and whom, therefore, it is unnecessary to propitiate. Then come a number of evil spirits who are ill-disposed towards human beings, and to whose malevolent influence are ascribed all the woes which afflict mankind. To them, therefore, sacrifices must be offered. These malevolent spirits are sylvan deities, spirits of the trees, the rocks, and the streams, and sometimes also of the tribal ancestors. There is no regular priesthood, but some persons are supposed to be better endowed with the powers of divination than others. When a calamity occurs, one of the diviners, *shamans* or sooth-sayers, is called on to ascertain the particular demon who is offended and who requires to be pacified by a sacrifice. This is done, either by devil dancing, when the diviner works himself into a paroxysm of drunkenness and excitement, and then holds converse with the unseen spirits around him, or by the examination of omens—eggs, grains of rice, or the entrails of a fowl. There is a profound belief in omens of all sorts; no journey is undertaken unless it is ascertained that the fates are propitious, while persons who have started on a journey will turn back should adverse omens be met with on the way."

TRIBES AND CASTES. Sheikhs.

Out of a total Muhammadan population of 824,345 persons, 813,412 were returned as Sheikhs at the census of 1911. 3,241 persons claimed to be Saiads, 3,675 Pathāns, and 289 Mughals. The Sheikhs are mostly cultivators and petty traders. The fact that only 33 persons were returned at the census as Nasyas, although the name might fairly be applied, and indeed in common speech is applied, to the large proportion of the Muhammadans in the district, shows with what aversion the name is regarded. As previously explained the caste name generally adopted by these Nasyas or converts is Sheikh.

Hindu castes Brahmans.

Tradition says that Ādisur Rājā, founder of the Sen dynasty, introduced five Brahman families into the district from Kanauj, a

sacred city of Upper India, and the eight thousand or so Brahmans now in the district are said to be chiefly descended from these five families. Whatever truth there may be in this story there is little doubt that the Brahmans of Dinājpur are of foreign origin, and have migrated to the district in comparatively recent times. Nowadays many of them have deserted their traditional occupation of priests and pandits, and have become merchants, traders and clerks. A few of the zamindāri families belong to this caste, the best known of these being the Māldwār family, residing at Rāmganj in Rānisankoil thānā.

Kāyasthas. The Kāyasthas, though few in numbers, hold a very respectable position in the district. Many of the zamindārs, and chief among them the Mahārājā of Dinājpur himself, belong to this caste. Many of the clerks in the employ of Government or of the large landholders also belong to it. These Kāyasthas are, like the Brahmans, mostly of foreign origin, their ancestors having come from other parts of Bengal, and possibly in some cases from Upper India also to take service with the foreign rulers of the country.

The Kāyasthas of Dinājpur claim to belong to the Kshatriya or warrior caste and state in support of this claim that when the original five Brahman families came to the district from Kanauj, at the invitation of Ādisur Rājā, they were accompanied by a corresponding number of Kāyastha families who made the journey in palanquins or mounted on elephants and horses. When the Kāyasthas were asked by the king in what capacity they had come, they said that, belonging as they did to the warrior caste, they were there as friends and protectors of the priestly Brahmans. It is to be regretted that this claim of the Kāyasthas is not supported by the Brahmans who affirm that the Kāyasthas who accompanied the Brahman families from Kanauj were merely clerks and secretaries.

Rājputs. There are about 4,000 of these in the district, chiefly in the employ of Government or the zamindārs, as policemen and *barkandāzes.*

Kaibarttas. Kaibarttas are by far the most important of the pure Hindu cultivating castes, numbering as they do about 33,000. Risley, in his "Tribes and Castes of Bengal," speaks of the Kaibarttas as "one of the characteristic castes of the deltaic districts of Bengal." He adds: "The nucleus of the group was probably Dravidian, but their original cast of feature may have been refined by a slight infusion of Aryan blood. The type, as it stands at present, is distinctly an intermediate one, equally removed from the extreme types of Aryan and Dravidian races found in Bengal." The principal occupation of this caste appears originally to have been fishing, but this has been abandoned and in Dinājpur they hold a good position among cultivators. A few of the smaller landholders belong to this caste

Hāris. Of low Hindu castes, the Hāris, of whom the Mihtars are a sub-caste, are the most numerous, numbering some 25,098 souls.

They are probably the remnant of some aboriginal tribe. Risley makes the following interesting remarks on their religion, social status, and occupation: "Although Haris profess to be Hindus and worship Kali and other of the standard gods in more or less meagre fashion, it seems probable that they have embraced Hinduism at a comparatively recent date. In Hugli indeed, they employ Brahmans for religious and ceremonial purposes, but these Brahmans are looked down upon by other members of the sacred order, and are generally regarded as only a little less degraded than Haris themselves. In other districts they have priests of their own caste, who bear the pretentious title of Pandit. The dead are usually burnt, and the ashes thrown into the nearest river. A pig is sacrificed on the tenth day after death to appease the spirit of the departed, the flesh being eaten by the relatives. On this occasion the nephew (sister's son) of the deceased person officiates as priest. Their social rank is of the lowest. No one will eat with a Hari or take water from his hands, and members of the caste are not permitted to enter the courtyard of the great temples. Some of them hold land as occupancy or non-occupancy *raiyats*, and many find employment as agricultural day-labourers. Tapping date trees, making bamboo combs, playing musical instruments at weddings and festivals, carrying palanquins, serving as syces, and scavenging, are among their characteristic occupations, but the removal of night-soil is confined to the Mihtar sub-caste. Their women often act as midwives. They are troubled with few scruples regarding diet. Fowls, pork, field-rats, scaly or scaleless fish, and the leavings of other castes are freely eaten; while in districts where the aboriginal races are numerous the Haris will even indulge in beef. Their partiality for strong drink is notorious."

Other Hindu castes.

Amongst other Hindu castes of less importance numerically may be mentioned the Jugis and Tāntis, who follow weaving as an occupation, though they are not entirely dependent on it for a livelihood, being cultivators as well. The largest settlements of these weavers are to be found at Chirirbandar and in the Bāliyādangi out-post. Many of the Tāntis are animists. The Nāpits, though numbering only some 10,270, are worthy of mention as a pure Sudrā caste of some respectability. Besides his occupation as barber, the Nāpit performs certain special functions at marriages and other ceremonies, and his trade has almost the status of a profession.

There are some 17,328 Vaishnabs in the district. Though a certain number of respectable persons belong to this caste or sect, it is chiefly recruited from Bairāgis or religious mendicants, and prostitutes. Sir William Hunter speaks of them as "not a separate caste, but a set of Hindus professing the principles inculcated by Chaitanya, a religious reformer of the sixteenth century. Although its main doctrine is the renunciation of caste, and the declaration of the equality of man, caste principles are

said to be now creeping into the sect, and the higher class of Vaishnabs, many of whom are well-to-do men, will not intermarry or mix in any way with the lower class. The sect now includes large numbers of wandering religious medicants, who desire to lead a life free from the restraints imposed by the caste system. A great many prostitutes style themselves Vaishnabs."

Semi-Hindu castes. The principal semi-Hindu caste in Dinājpur is the Rājbansi, under which general head may be included 66,415 Desi Rājbansis, 158,798 Paliyās and a few Kantāis and Koches. The origin of the Rājbansis as a race has already been discussed. With reference to their religious system, Risley says : "They keep Brahmans, imitate the Brahmanical ritual in their marriage ceremony, and have begun to adopt the Brahmanical system of Gotras. In respect of this last point they are now in a curious state of transition as they have all hit upon the same Gotra (Kasyapa) and thus habitually transgress the primary rule of the Brahmanical system, which absolutely prohibits marriage within the Gotra. But for this defect in their connubial arrangements—a defect which will probably be corrected in a generation or two as they and their *purohits* rise in intelligence—there would be nothing in their customs to distinguish them from Aryan Hindus." This last statement seems to go rather too far, as the author says later on that a certain section of the Paliyās eat pork, fowls, crocodiles, lizards, etc., and indulge freely in strong drink, which is an undoubted fact, but which is certainly not in accordance with the customs of Aryan Hindus. The Desi Rājbansis claim to be better than the Paliyās, in that they conform more strictly to Hindu custom. The more orthodox Rājbansis burn their dead, and profess to marry their daughters as infants, and to forbid widow remarriage. Amongst the less orthodox the dead are burnt or buried as is most convenient, and adult marriage and widow remarriage prevail. All classes appear to recognise divorce.

A certain percentage of the Sāntāls, Orāons, and Mundās, who have settled in the district, were returned at the 1901 census as Hindus. Their claim to the title was, however, probably based upon their own assertion alone, and it is more than doubtful whether it was really justified. At all events, admitting that a certain number of these aborigines have adopted Hinduism, their religion is still in a very elementary stage, in that they keep no Brahmans, eat pork and fowls, and are addicted to strong drink.

CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE. Any one who has had much experience of them will give the people of the Dinājpur district a good character. They are a simple and contented race, neither insolent and ostentatious in prosperity nor yielding readily to despair in adversity. They cannot be dscribed as quarrelsome, serious rioting being almost unknown, and if they indulge unduly in litigation it is largely at the instigation of the touts or lawyers' jackals, to be found in every village, and who go by the name of *diwaniās*. Their relations with each other and with their superiors are generally friendly

and amongst the lower orders sullenness and discourtesy to strangers are rarely met with. The same placid and friendly spirit prevails amongst the landholding classes, who seldom think it necessary to quarrel with each other or oppress their tenants. The district is an old-fashioned one. In it the spirit of unrest, with which certain other districts of the province have recently become infected, has made little headway. The people generally are too prosperous and contented to have any use for the agitator and the demagogue, and persist in regarding their rulers rather as friendly powers than as tyrants and oppressors.

The district is purely agricultural, and, the area being large in proportion to the population, employment is easily obtainable, and there is little inclination to leave home and seek employment elsewhere. The rise in the prices of agricultural produce which has taken place in recent years has been accompanied by a material increase in prosperity, and the people have shown signs of a tendency to desert their former thrifty habits for more extravagant ones. This tendency has been fostered by the enormous increase in size and number of the fairs or *melās*, at which opportunity is given to the cultivator to spend his savings.

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

CLIMATE.

The district of Dinājpur has at all times been notorious for unhealthiness. According to tradition, fever, which is the prevailing scourge, was introduced into the district during the war between Krishnā and Bān Rājā about the time of Alexander's invasion of India. In 1807, Buchanan Hamilton, speaking of natural checks on the increase of population, wrote: "The grand check, however, to the excess of population is disease, which makes ample room, and fever annually sweeps away immense numbers; although I do not think that any means would ever render Dinājpur a country remarkably salubrious, yet I am persuaded that the excessive prevalence of fever is more owing to the want of stimulating diet and of comfortable lodging and clothing, the consequence of poverty, than to any extraordinary degree of malignity in the air; and the great poverty of the natives is no doubt to be chiefly attributed to their improvidence, especially in forming early marriages, by which they have been involved in debt. The fevers are often of the remitting kind and terminate fatally in a few days; but more commonly they terminate in agues, or commence under that form, and are accompanied by enlargements of the spleen and dropsical swellings, which carry off the sufferer after long confinement. In fact, there are few who escape with less confinement than one month in the year, and the whole are a sickly, poor-looking people." Major Sherwill, the Revenue Surveyor, writing in 1863, emphasises the dread in which the district was held by strangers. "The climate," he says, "is very unhealthy, and is justly held in great dislike by strangers, including Bengalis, on account of its insalubrity. When the Second Division, Revenue Survey, was ordered from Burdwan into Dinajpur, many of the oldest and best native Bengali Surveyors resigned, rather than face the dangers of so dreaded a climate. In the seasons of 1857-58 and 1858-59, this survey was nearly disorganised by sickness. As many as 13 surveying parties were unfit for work at the same time, and almost all were sick and weakly from the effects of fever, which is the prevailing epidemic. The villagers have a sickly appearance, and many are annually carried off by fever and cholera. Natives are more easily affected by the climate than Europeans, which is probably attributable to the freer mode of living of the latter, which enables them the better to withstand its baneful effects, also to the greater exposure of natives to the night air."

The remarks of these two officers still hold good in a general sense, though it is probable that with the introduction of the use of quinine, and the gradual clearance of jungle, the general health of the district has somewhat improved in recent years. The standard of living, too, amongst the natives of the district has risen since Buchanan Hamilton's time, and the people are no longer conspicuous for poverty though they still live poorly enough, and their houses and their surroundings are not so prosperous looking and well kept as those of the villagers in many other parts of India. In the matter of providence there has been little change in the habits of the people. They still waste a lot of money, which might be spent on increasing their comfort, on marriages and ceremonies, and on unnecessary extravagance at the local fairs

VITAL STATISTICS.

It is difficult to arrive at any satisfactory conclusions by comparing the vital statistics for any considerable period, as the system of registering births and deaths has been changed more than once in recent times. In 1869, the duty of registering deaths in the district was entrusted to the village chaukidārs or watchmen, while in Dinājpur town this work was performed by the officers of the municipality. In 1888, the municipal authorities began to register births. In 1892, the mofussil chaukidārs began to register births as well as deaths, while in the town the collection of vital statistics was transferred from the municipality to the police.

Under this system, vital statistics, both in urban and rural areas, are collected by the chaukidārs. These report to the thānā officers at the weekly parades, and the latter submit returns to the Civil Surgeon, in whose office the statistics for the district are compiled These statistics, though far from complete, and without any great pretensions to accuracy, afford data for gauging the growth of the population, for comparing one year with another in the matter of healthiness, as well as for comparing the mortality due to different diseases. Taking the period 1883—1905, it appears that the highest death rate (45·85 per mille) was recorded in 1900, and the lowest (17·62 per mille) in 1884. The highest birth rate (49·36 per mille) was recorded in 1902 and the lowest (27·05 per mille) in 1892, the first year in which the registration of births began throughout the district. The steady tendency of both the birth rate and death rate to rise throughout this period appears to me to indicate clearly that the increase in the latter is not due to a deterioration in the health of the district, but to more careful registration. The registration of births is still very far from perfect A comparison of the average birth rate per thousand with the average death rate in the ten years from 1893—1902 shows that the deaths exceeded the births by 4·18 per thousand, and even the large amount of immigration would hardly suffice to counterbalance such a decrease.

PRINCIPAL DISEASES. Malarial fever.

Malarial fever is not only the most prevalent, but by far the most deadly disease. As Buchanan Hamilton says: "Fever makes such ample havoc, that little room seems to be left for other diseases." The chaukidār, of course, who is the reporting agency, displays the usual tendency to report all deaths which are not obviously caused by cholera, small-pox, or some well-known disease, as due to fever, but enquiries have shown that most of the deaths reported under fever may really be ascribed to malarial affections. Regarding the types of fever found in Dinājpur, Major Rogers, I.M.S., who was selected by Government in 1904 to make a special enquiry into the causes of the prevalence of fevers in the Dinājpur district, found that the most usual type of fever was the malignant tertian, common to Calcutta and most parts of India. He also found the quartan type, which is said to be the most common in the Duārs, and which is usually of a chronic nature, and terminates fatally after several months of sickness. According to this authority, the districts of Rangpur and Dinājpur were the home of the terrible kālā-āzār of Assam. During the course of his enquiry in 1904, he found traces of this disease, which is characterised by a great enlargement of the spleen, accompanied by general wasting and darkening of the skin, still surviving in the district. The disease, though not general, was found fairly frequently in Rānisankoil thānā, in the north-west of the district. It seems to be gradually disappearing. Other common types of fever are simple, tertian, quotidian, and remittent. On the average for the ten years 1893—1902 the deaths from fever for the whole district were 33·30 per mille as compared with 3·24 due to all other causes. The lowest average fever death rate, 21·84 per mille, is shown against Dinājpur municipality, while Rānisankoil thānā has the highest, with 38·59 per mille. Birganj thānā with 36·54, and Rāiganj and Kotwāli thānās with 36·28 each, show the next highest averages. The thānās of Kāliyāganj, Bansihāri, Gangārāmpur, Phulbāri, Nawābganj, Thākurgāon, and Pirganj, all show averages of over 32 deaths per mille from this cause. It is a matter of regret that old writers such as Buchanan Hamilton and Major Sherwill were unable to give statistics of mortality with which the statistics of recent years might have been compared. It is thus impossible to judge with any accuracy to what extent the health of the district is improving or deteriorating. A comparison of the death rates from fevers in 1888 and 1889, with those in the four years 1906—1909 is greatly in favour of the former. These death rates were 1888—27·84, 1889—25·74, 1906—41·54, 1907—39·22, 1908—36·75, 1909—35·45 per mille. The decennial average for the years 1899—1908, namely, 37·84 per mille is also higher than that for the years 1893—1902, already quoted. These figures would seem to show that the health of the district is growing worse instead of better, notwithstanding that the country is getting more opened up, and the use of quinine more general. It is almost certain,

however, that the increased death rate shown in recent years is due to better reporting, and not to an increase in unhealthiness. I have already drawn attention to the lower death rate from fevers in the Dinājpur municipality, as compared with the surrounding district. This, to one who knows the place, does not indicate that the town is really more healthy than elsewhere. It is rather the reverse. The inhabitants of the town, however, are more enlightened than the villagers, have a more comfortable standard of living, and resort freely to quinine and other European medicines when ill, while the villagers are dependent on the kabirājes, with their obsolete methods of treatment, and have an unreasoning dread of quinine, which many think causes fever instead of curing it. Many of the town dwellers, too, have their homes in the country, or in other districts, and when they get seriously ill go home to die, or recover, as the case may be. The cause of the prevalence of malarial fever in Dinājpur has never yet been satisfactorily determined. Major Sherwill says the north of the district is healthier than the south, as there is less jungle there, and fewer tanks and marshes. Recent sanitary reports show that at the present day the contrary is true, as the northern part of the district is unhealthier than the southern. The Civil Surgeons seem generally to be of opinion that the unhealthiness of the district is due to its water-logged condition. By water-logged it is not meant that the country is subject to periodical floods and inundations, as is the case with some of the more easterly districts, like Bākarganj and Dāccā. On the contrary, to the superficial observer the district seems a rather dry one, and in the cold weather many parts of it resemble Behār rather than Eastern Bengal. In reality, however, this appearance is deceptive, not only is the country full of old tanks which, being choked with jungle, form an excellent breeding ground for mosquitoes, but even in the height of the dry season water is struck in most parts at a depth of 7 or 8 feet, while in the rains it is very near the surface indeed. This characteristic was especially noticeable in the drought of 1909, when a number of old tanks, most of them completely dried up, were re-excavated as test or relief works. The average depth of these tanks when work was started on them was some 7 or 8 feet below the level of the surrounding country. In almost every instance water was struck when 4 or 5 feet had been excavated. In certain parts of the district the water level is much lower, and these are generally found to be the most healthy localities. Major Rogers in his report speaks of "a remarkable relationship between a high ground water level and high spleen rates and fever mortality of the thānās, and *vice versā*. Thus at Porsa the ground water level was 33 feet down, and the spleen rate was only 28·3, the lowest met with, while the fever death rate of 29·05 per thousand was also the lowest of all the thānās. Exactly the reverse holds good of the Ranisankoil circle, in which the highest ground water level coincides with the highest spleen and

fever rates. Similarly Dinajpur, Birganj, and Thakurgaon thanas show high ground water levels and spleen and fever rates, while those of Balurghat and Churaman have lower rates approaching those of Porsa." The heavy mortality from fevers in this district and especially in Dinājpur town has exercised the minds of the authorities for many years, but it is only recently that systematic attempts have been made to combat the disease. Major Rogers found the system of selling pice packets of quinine at post offices, which was started in 1892, unsatisfactory. The villagers do not visit the post offices in any numbers, and when they do, seldom think of purchasing quinine. In 1906, on the recommendation of the Civil Surgeon, some of the Hospital Assistants attached to the charitable dispensaries in the district were instructed to visit the weekly markets nearest their dispenaries, and distribute quinine to the villagers. The Hospital Assistnts complained that these visits to the market interrupted their ordinary work, and that the villagers showed no eagerness to take quinine from them. In 1908-09 five new dispensaries were opened by the District Board, and early in 1909, on the recommendation of the Civil Surgeon, a number of primary school teachers were induced to undertake the sale of quinine tabloids. As regards Dinājpur town, several schemes for improving its sanitation, by levelling the beds of the Ghāgrā and Kaclāi Nalās, and thereby abolishing the ponds and cess-pools, which now form in the beds of these canals, have been mooted from time to time, but have always been abandoned as costly and uncertain in their results. As an alternative measure, an anti-malarial campaign, on the lines of that recommended by Major Ross for Mauritius, was started in the town in January 1908. The principle followed was to fill up all hollows of manageable size, to remove rubbish of all sorts from the neighbourhood of the houses, to clear ditches and tanks of jungle, and to treat small tanks and pools with raw kerosine. An integral part of the campaign was the wide distribution of quinine amongst the inhabitants of the town. In March 1909, Dr Bentley, a specialist in malaria, visited Dinājpur at the request of the Sanitary Commissioner, and made an enquiry similar to that made by Rogers five years before. Like the latter he held that it was little use attempting to destroy the anopheles mosquito, but that the injury done by this insect might be greatly diminished, and in time almost entirely done away with, by the systematic use of quinine. Accordingly, while the clearing of jungle and removal of rubbish was continued, redoubled efforts were made to push the distribution of quinine amongst the inhabitants of the town, while studying the effects produced. It is too early yet to judge of the result of these measures, but the statistics supplied by the Civil Surgeon with his report on the progress of the campaign in 1909 are distinctly encouraging. The ratio per thousand of deaths from fever during the year, which was not by any means a healthy one, was slightly

lower than the average ratio per thousand for the five years from 1904 to 1908, while the proportion of deaths from fever to total deaths was very much lower.

Cholera. Outbreaks of cholera are of yearly occurrence, but are rarely of a very serious nature. These outbreaks occur generally at the beginning of the cold and the hot seasons, and last for a month or six weeks at a time. It is hard to say that one part of the district is more subject to such outbreaks than another, but the disease usually seems to follow the course of one of the bigger rivers, the infection being doubtless carried by the river water. It is noticeable that in years of deficient rainfall such outbreaks are more marked, and assume more of an epidemic form. The reason why cholera is much less prevalent in this district than in many others is probably that the population as a whole get their drinking water from wells in their own compounds, and these are naturally much less liable to contamination than public sources of supply, such as tanks and rivers. These wells are, however, seldom deeper than 12 to 15 feet and in a rainless season they run dry and the people are driven to drinking tank or river water, frequently with disastrous results. The death rate from cholera in this district is so small as compared with that from fever, that it seems hardly worth while comparing one year with another, but the year 1891 may perhaps be mentioned as an exceptionally bad one, when the deaths from this cause came to a total of 6,491 or 4·17 per thousand. This death rate, though high for Dinājpur, is low as compared with many other districts of the province.

Other diseases and infirmities. The diseases next in importance to cholera are dysentery and diarrhoea, which may be classed under one head. The mortality from these is small. In the mango season a kind of choleraic diarrhœa, caused by eating unripe mangoes, is common enough, but seldom ends fatally. Outbreaks of small-pox are fairly frequent, but the type is not virulent, and does little damage. Cases reported as small-pox are frequently found on investigation to be really chicken-pox, a comparatively harmless complaint. Buchanan Hamilton speaks of leprosy being common in his day, and says that one person in a hundred was supposed to be affected with it. Nowadays the disease is comparatively rare. Goitre and elephantiasis are occasionally seen. The former disease seems to attack women especially, and is most common in the neighbourhood of the Punarbhabā and Ātrāi rivers. Skin affections and intestinal worms are fairly prevalent complaints. Diseases of the eye are not particularly common. Insanity is rare, the total number of idiots and insanes being returned in 1882 as 569, and in 1891 as 1,019. The reason for this probably is that the people are on the whole very temperate, and little addicted to drink or drugs. Also the district is an agricultural one, and fairly prosperous, so that the burden of life does not all very heavily on the ordinary man.

VACCINATION. Vaccination is compulsory within municipal limits only. The people recognise its utility, and seldom raise objection to themselves and their children being operated on. In fact, when an outbreak of small-pox occurs, they are eager to get the services of a vaccinator. On such occasions the work of vaccination is carried on with extra vigour, and it is probably greatly on this account that the district suffers so little from the disease. As an instance of the work that is being done by the vaccinators no less than 113,766 vaccinations were performed in 1909, when there was a rather severer epidemic than usual.

MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS Till very recently the medical needs of the district were much neglected. This was not due so much to want of will on the part of the authorities, as to the poverty of the District Board, the bulk of whose funds had to be spent on keeping up communications. The number of dispensaries was very small for such a large district. Not counting the railway dispensary at Pārbatipur which, being only open to railway servants and travellers by the line, could not be called a charitable dispensary, there were only 11 such institutions in the whole district. Of these the dispensaries at Thākurgāon, and Phulbāri, were maintained at the cost of the District Board, aided to some extent by subscriptions from the public, while the male and female hospitals in the town of Dinājpur were maintained partly by the District Board, partly by the Municipality, and partly by Government. All these institutions, except those at Birganj and Phulbāri, provided accommodation for in-door patients. The dispensaries at Rāiganj, Churāman, Rāmganj, Haripur and Sitābganj were maintained at the cost of certain public spirited zamindārs. They only treated out-door patients. The hospital at Bālurghāt and the dispensary at Birganj were mainly supported by subscriptions though they received some slight assistance from the District Board. At the end of 1906, the Civil Surgeon made a special appeal to the District Board to increase the medical expenditure, pointing out how unhealthy the district was, and how difficult it was to obtain medical treatment in many parts of it. In response to this appeal the District Board decided to open several new dispensaries, as funds would permit, and accordingly new dispensaries were opened in the years 1908 and 1909 at Patirām, Patnitolā, Porshā, Gangārāmpur and Rāniganj. Of these the dispensaries at Patirām and Rāniganj receive substantial aid from the local zamindārs. The Churāman wards estate also opened a new dispensary at Durgāpur. A comparison of the number of out-patients treated at the District Board dispensaries in 1905 (24,001) with the number treated in 1909 (42,295) shows that substantial progress has been made in bringing medical aid within the reach of the people. If the same rate of progress is maintained the district will soon bear comparison in this respect with the most advanced districts of the province such as Bākarganj. The private institutions are no less popular than those maintained by the District Board

and perhaps the best attended dispensaries in the district are those at Rāmganj and Churāman. The hospital at Dinājpur is well found and popular, but the female hospital situated close to it is not an unqualified success. This, although well found and equipped, possessing ample accommodation even for *purdah* ladies, and under the control of a competent lady doctor, is but poorly attended. The prejudice which prevents respectable women from attending a hospital, however private and well managed, is alone responsible for this.

CHAPTER V.

AGRICULTURE.

GENERAL CONDITION. Formation of the land.

The Dinājpur district is a triangular tract of country, roughly resembling England and Wales in shape, with the acute angle towards the north. It is situated in the Gangetic plain between the Himālayas and the Ganges. Its most northerly point is some 25 miles from the hills. The country slopes gently from north to south and the general trend of the rivers is in the same direction. In the northern half of the district the soil is light ash coloured sandy loam changing gradually as one proceeds south to a stiff clay of similar colour. The former goes by the name of *pali*, is very retentive of moisture and is capable of producing two crops; the latter is known as *khiār* and ordinarily bears but a single crop. In the southern or *khiār* area isolated patches of the lighter soil are to be found here and there, especially on both sides of some of the larger rivers like the Atrāi. This indicates that this sandy loam had its origin in the sand and silt deposited by the rivers when they overflowed their banks. This is hardly true *pali* but is rather soil in a transition stage with a larger proportion of sand in its composition than the older *pali*. *Chorā* or *bāliyā*, as it is sometimes called, is perhaps a better name for it. Nowadays the beds of most of the rivers are deep and wide and the deposit of sand or silt by floods is no longer a factor to be reckoned with seriously over the greater part of the district. In the lower reaches of the Nāgar, Punarbhabā, and Maha-nanda, however, owing to the lowness of the river banks floods are of yearly occurrence and large stretches of country are on this account given up to jungle or bear only occasional crops of *boro* or spring rice, which is reaped just before the rivers rise. The *khiār* or clay land grows as a rule only one crop in the year, winter rice. On rare occasions when the rice crop fails attempts are made to take a second crop of mustard from it, but such attempts are not attended with much success. In the *pali* tracts two crops are or may be grown. Common rotations are autumn rice followed by mustard, and jute followed by winter rice or pulse. In the extreme south of the district the Bārind, described in a previous chapter, makes its appearance. The higher ground in this tract is generally barren and little attempt is made to cultivate it, though with time and determination this can be done successfully. The low ground is a stiff clay of reddish colour and is excellent winter rice land, though, like the *khiār* area, it does not lend itself to the cultivation of any other crop.

There are at the present day no embankments of any importance in the district though some traces of earlier works of this nature may be seen here and there. The most noticeable of these is a long straight embankment called the Mukdam Bānd, running from Gājal on the Māldā border to Rāiganj. This embankment dates from Muhammadan times. Its object was partly to keep out the water of the Nāgar river, which almost annually overflows its banks and renders many thousands of acres unculturable, and partly to serve as a highway through the low-lying country on the south-western border. How far it was originally successful as an embankment it is hard to say, but in recent times it had become breached in many places and the flood-water passed freely through it. During the scarcity which prevailed in the district in 1908-09, a considerable portion of it was raised and repaired rather on account of its utility as a road than with the idea of protection against floods. This embankment is now in places some 20 feet high by 30 to 40 feet broad at the base. **Embankments.**

Notwithstanding the rise in importance of jute in recent years, rice is still by far the most important crop, covering as it does 998,700 acres or 79·6 per cent. of the net cropped area. Dinājpur is, indeed, one of the chief rice-growing districts of the province. The principal crops are winter rice (*haimantik*), autumn rice (*bhādoi*), jute, and rape and mustard. The remarks of Mr. O'Malley on winter and autumn rice in his Gazetteer of the Chittagong district may appropriately be quoted here as they are equally applicable to Dinājpur. "Winter rice is usually sown in July and August, transplanted in August and September, and reaped in December. The critical period for this crop is the transplantation season, when copious rain is required; but at the end of September and in October rain is also urgently necessary to swell the grain. For the autumn rice crop (*bhādoi*) ploughing commences with the pre-monsoon showers which fall in March and April; and the crop is sown in May, some weeks before the regular monsoon rains commence. For a successful crop there should be some rain in March, April and May, and the monsoon should commence in June with moderate showers, with frequent intervals of fine weather to permit of weeding operations, and to enable the young seedlings to put forth a vigorous growth before the heavy rainfall which usually follows in July. Excessive rain in May and June is extremely injurious to the young crop. During July and August the rainfall should be heavy, but with intervals of fine weather. The crop flowers in August and stands in need of rain at this time in order that it may be enabled to throw out shoots, and in order that the grain may fill out. Want of rain in August is on this account very harmful to the prospects of the crop. The autumn paddy crop is mostly reaped by the middle of September, and, except where it is sown late, it is not influenced by the character of the rainfall after the middle of September." Jute is commonly sown at the end of April or beginning of May. A great deal depends on **Rainfall.**

the weather conditions at sowing time. If there is an insufficiency of moisture at this season the crop will not germinate, while, on the other hand, if moisture is in excess the young seedlings are liable to be drowned out before they have strength to resist partial or total submersion. During May and the early part of June jute thrives under much the same conditions as does *bhādoi* rice. By the end of June it has made good growth and from thence onwards moderate floods do little harm provided that the plants are not submerged for so long a period that they begin to throw out adventitious roots, which injuriously affect the fibre. Early jute is reaped in July to August and late jute in August to September. At harvest time a large supply of water in the rivers and *khāls* is essential so that the process of retting, for which plenty of fairly clean water is required, may be carried out without hindrance. Rape and mustard, which are cold weather crops, require comparatively little rain. They are sown at the end of October or beginning of November on *pali* lands, which usually have already borne a crop of autumn rice, and which have been ploughed in August and September immediately after the first crop was cut. A little rain in November greatly encourages the growth of the crop. If it gets this it can do without rain till well into January when another inch or two is required to swell the grain. The average period of growth of the crop is about three months and it is reaped from February to March.

Irrigation.

Irrigation as an agricultural practice can scarcely under normal circumstances be said to exist. The channels of the rivers and streams are too deep to lend themselves readily to this practice and irrigation channels and wells are unknown. The people too are averse to the trouble involved. They can hardly be blamed for this as in normal years the rainfall is plentiful enough and irrigation is unnecessary. In dry years some attempt is made, especially in the southern part of the district, to utilise tanks for purposes of irrigation, the water being raised either by triangular mat baskets (*chhenāi*) swung by two men from ropes tied at the corners, or by hollowed out tree trunks with a weight at one end (*jat*) which are forced down into the water and allowed to spring up so that a stream of water is projected from the weighted end.

Levels.

Although in the Dinājpur district the general appearance of the country outside the Bārind tracts is flat, it must not be imagined that the level is everywhere the same. Every rice plain has a natural slope in one direction or another which enables the surplus rain water to drain off. To quote again Mr. O'Malley: "The question of levels is a most important one in determining the relative fertility of rice fields in a country of abundant rainfall.........the level of each plain is disturbed by a number of obstacles to the drainage, such as raised village sites, embanked roads, tank banks, etc. The general effect of the variety of levels found in every rice plain is to fertilise the lower at the expense of the higher fields; for the silt, composed to a great extent of

light particles of organic matter, is held in solution as long as the rain water is in motion and is only deposited when the water lies stagnant. Every man's desire is to hold back the water in his own field, and to compel it to discharge its silt there; and with this object each field is surrounded by a small embankment (*āil*) in order to retain the water in a stagnant condition. But during heavy rains the water must be let out, or, even if no opening is made in the embankment, the water tops it. In this way the bulk of the rain water with its rich silt finds its way to the lowest levels of each small saucer-shaped depression, taking with it the silt which it has collected from all the higher fields over which it has passed. It follows, therefore, that the lower the field, the more fertile it is. There is another consideration also in favour of the lowest fields, *viz.*, that they need less embanking in order to retain the water, and therefore cost less to cultivate. A large exception to this general rule occurs in the case of swamps. They are produced by under-ground springs which cause an unhealthy accumulation of sub-surface water, which rots vegetation. In such a swamp the higher fields are naturally the best."

Wild animals.

Up to comparatively recent times considerable damage to crops was caused by wild buffalo, deer and pig. Nowadays the two former may be said to be extinct, while the latter only survive in diminished numbers in a few localities and do little harm. Jungle fowl, another enemy of the farmer, which used to be common enough, have now disappeared, but parrots and small birds still cause a certain amount of damage. The *māchāns* or bamboo platforms, set up in the fields for watching the crops, which are such a feature in some districts, are rarely seen, as the crops do not require to be watched. Besides small birds, rats cause some injury especially to the rice crops, cutting off the ears and storing them in under-ground granaries. There is, however, no record of a plague of rats, a phenomenon well known in the districts on the eastern seaboard.

Principal crops.

The principal crops in order of importance are (1) winter rice (*haimantik*), (2) autumn rice (*bhadoi*), (3) jute, (4) rape and mustard, (5) sugarcane, (6) cold weather crops such as pulses, tobacco, and vegetables.

Rice.

Winter rice is by far the most important crop and covers some 68·7 per cent. of the net cropped area. Autumn rice, though comparatively unimportant, is nevertheless grown on a considerable scale. Some 10 per cent. of the net cropped area is sown with this. *Boro* or summer rice is only grown on a very small scale, though in abnormal years when the winter rice crop has been a poor one a good deal of land is put under this crop in order to supply the deficiency of food-grains, as it is reaped in May. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton, who a hundred years ago made an exhaustive study of the agriculture of the district, recorded some very interesting remarks on the different varieties of rice grown which may aptly be quoted here. "One kind, called Boro by the natives,

ripens in the hot weather of spring and is cultivated only in small quantities, chiefly in inundated lands, where there are marshes and old water-courses, that preserve a small quantity of water throughout the year; sometimes a dam is made across the water-course at the end of the rainy season, and its upper part forms a reservoir filled with water, which is let gradually out to supply the rice which is planted in the lower part which has been drained in order to admit of cultivation. In other parts small quantities of this rice are cultivated on the sides of old tanks that are partly filled up and the water is thrown up on the rice by a simple machine. In times of scarcity many poor people engage in this kind of cultivation which gives them a temporary supply of food at the dearest season. In other years less attention is bestowed on it for the grain is very coarse and the produce small, so that it would ill repay the labour. It is always transplanted, and its straw can seldom be saved. The grain is almost always consumed by those who have raised it.

(2) Next follows the summer rice, called in the district Bhaduyi, and reckoned to be only of one kind. The grain is used almost entirely by the labourers on the farm and is seldom sold. It is said that it will not keep for more than a year. It is reckoned very heavy and indigestible for those who are not hardened by labour; very considerable quantities however are raised, as where two crops of rice are taken in the year, or where a crop of rice is to be followed by wheat, barley, oilseeds, or most kinds of pulse, this is the only kind that can be cultivated. In some places the pulse called Thakuri is sown along with this rice and ripens a month after it is cut. This does not prevent the field giving a winter crop of anything except rice. It is generally sown broadcast and, unless it is followed by a winter crop of rice, does not require that the field in which it is sown should be reduced to an absolute level. In a few places, however, it is transplanted and is then a month later in coming to maturity, so that it cannot be followed by another crop of rice; but this does not prevent its being followed by any other crop, and the quality of the grain is rather superior to that which has been sown broadcast." About winter rice he says: "The coarsest kinds are those which grow in very low land, that is deeply inundated. They are sown broadcast in spring and require a long time to come to maturity. Sometimes they are sown intermixed with summer rice, as I have before mentioned; but this practice is confined to a small extent of ground in the vicinity of the Nagar river. These kinds are little better than summer rice. These coarse rices do not keep well and are generally consumed by the labourers on the farm..........These rices are the common food of the poor. Somewhat finer is a numerous tribe of rices, which are transplanted into land rather higher than the former, and are not preceded by a summer crop of rice, but in a free soil they are generally followed by a crop of pulse, which is sown amongst

the growing corn and flowers soon after it has been cut: but when the rice is cut early, the field is ploughed afterwards and sown with the pulse.........The straw is not very good for cattle, but is used. As it is very rank about a foot only, near the top, is cut with the grain, and the stems are afterwards cut for fuel or thatch. The rice, like all the transplanted kinds, keeps well, even when cleared. It is reckoned better and lighter after the first year and continues in perfection for three years. Next follow a great number of winter rices, which are of rather a fine quality, and are transplanted into high fields, generally as a second crop, especially where the soil is free. Sometimes, however, the summer crop is omitted and at other times in a very rich soil, a third crop (generally of peas) is produced. These kinds of rice are particularly valuable, as their straw is almost the only tolerable fodder that is procurable." The above is still a tolerable description of the chief varieties of rice grown in the district at the present day, it being understood that by summer rice he means *bhādoi* or autumn rice. His statement that this particular variety is of only one kind may have been correct in his day, but nowadays several varieties of it are commonly grown. He mentions a large number of kinds of winter rice, but I have omitted them as the names used are many of them not in use at the present day. The chief varieties of autumn and winter rice now grown in the district are:—

(1) Autumn rice: *Duni*, *Jamā*, *Gorbāi*, *Sani*, all white varieties, of which the first two are the most grown, and *Niluji*, a red variety, not very largely grown.

(2) Winter rice: *Kātāribhog*, *Daudkhāni*, *Dighalsaru*, *Dārikā sail*, all fine white rices, of which the first two are well known and appreciated throughout the province.

Coarser varieties of winter rice are *Indrā-sail*, *Kalam*, *Pāni sail*, *Supandari*, *Chengā*, *Gajālgāri*, *Mālsirā*. The four first are white and the three last red varieties. *Gajālgāri* is much used for making *khai* or fried rice. Autumn rice is principally grown throughout the Thākurgāon subdivision and in the thānās of Rāiganj, Nawābganj and the outpost Hemtābād in the Sadar subdivision. Winter rice is the principal crop throughout the Bālurghāt subdivision and in the Kotwāli, Bansihāri and Pārbatipur thānās in the Sadar subdivision. *Boro* rice is grown to a small extent in Porshā and Gangārāmpur thānās.

In the case of all rice crops the land must be well prepared by ploughing. The number of ploughings necessary depends on the nature of the soil. A heavy soil requires more ploughings than a light one. Each ploughing is a double ploughing, *i.e.*, once lengthwise and then at right angles, and every double ploughing is followed by one or more ladderings with a ladder or *moyi* to break the clods and produce a fine tilth. The system of

cultivation followed for broadcast autumn and broadcast winter rice is also somewhat different to that adopted for transplanted rice. In the former case the land is twice harrowed with what is called a *bidā*, once when the crop is some 4 inches high and once when it has attained a height of about 8 or 9 inches. The object of this is to loosen the soil, and to destroy weeds and superfluous plants of rice, so that the crop may come up in regular clumps almost as if it had been transplanted. Both autumn rice and broadcast winter rice are sown about the same time, *i.e.*, at the end of April or beginning of May and get two weedings about the end of May and the third week of June. In the case of transplanted rice, the seedlings are sown thickly on high land, generally near the homestead, about the same time that broadcast rice is sown. The seed bed is reduced to a very fine tilth by ploughing and laddering and is generally manured with cowdung. The seeds of the finer varieties of winter paddy are first soaked in water till they sprout and then sown in the seed bed about a month before transplanting, the surface of the seed bed being puddled by the application of water. If the rain water is not sufficient for the purpose, irrigation is resorted to. The fields in which the seedlings are to be transplanted usually get two double ploughings at intervals of about a week or fortnight. The second double ploughing reduces the land to a puddle and the seedlings are then transplanted in clumps of 3 or 4 roots at a time. Sometimes if transplanting is done late in the season as many as 5 or 6 seedlings are planted in a clump. Two inches to a foot of water on the land is necessary for successful transplanting, the water being retained by the small embankments or *āils* by which every rice plot is surrounded.

The date for transplanting winter rice varies according to the nature of the land and the character of the season. Low lands are generally transplanted first about the end of June, and the higher lands as the water rises and makes transplanting on them possible, but if the rainfall is short or long delayed transplanting may be carried on till the middle of September.

Jute.

Ninety-two thousand acres were reported as being under jute in the year 1909-10. There has been a marked increase in the cultivation of this staple in recent years, though it has been well known in the district for over a century. Buchanan Hamilton speaks of it as the fibre in general use in his day for making cordage, gunny bags, and even coarse cloth. It appears however that up till comparatively recent times it was only grown for local consumption as Major Sherwill, the Revenue Surveyor, mentions it as quite one of the less important crops. Nowadays a considerable quantity is exported. Something has already been said of the seasons for sowing and reaping this crop and of the weather conditions most suitable to its growth. Jute is grown on *pali* lands, the soil of which is comparatively loose and light. It generally receives some four weedings at intervals of about a fort-

night, during the months of May and June. The process of retting to extract the fibre from the plant is interesting and may be briefly described After harvesting the stems are tied into bundles and placed in the water of a stream or backwater to rot. The bundles are weighted with clods of earth or pieces of plantain-stem so that they may be completely submerged. If the water is fairly clean a better quality of fibre may be looked for than if muddy water is used. After the stems have been in the water for about a fortnight the bark or fibre which has become loosened is stripped off them and washed and the stems are thrown aside to be used as firewood or for purposes of fencing when dry. After washing, the fibre is dried and is then ready for sale or export. Jute is principally grown in the Thākurgāon subdivision and also in parts of the Kotwāli and Rāiganj thānās and in the Chirirbandar outpost.

Oilseeds. The only important oilseeds are rape and mustard. These are grown on some 90,000 acres. They are a cold weather crop and are grown on high lands especially along the banks of rivers and near homesteads. The principal thānās where this crop is grown are Rāiganj, Rānisaukoil and Kāliyāganj.

Sugarcane. Sugarcane occupies an area of 25,000 acres. The principal varieties, *kheri* and *mugi*, are thin-stemmed, the former red and the latter green. The canes of both are hard and resistant to white-ants and jackals. The time of planting is March or April and of harvesting January or February, that is to say, the period of growth is about 11 months. The ground should be high and capable of retaining moisture. Irrigation is required when the cuttings are beginning to take root, and cowdung manure is freely used. The canes are planted in rows about 3 feet apart. As the crop attains its full growth it is the general custom to tie the tops together in bunches so as to keep the canes upright and prevent their being broken by storms. Although the canes now grown in the district are almost exclusively of the thin hard stemmed varieties, it is interesting to note that in the year 1840 the soft thick stemmed Otaheitean and Bourbon canes were introduced into the district by a Mr. J. W. Payter, Ijāradār of the principal Government Khās Mahāls. These varieties, yielding as they did a much larger percentage of sugar, were much appreciated and quickly spread all over the district, but in the year 1857-58 they were attacked by what appears to have been the Red-rot disease of sugarcane and in a year or so they had completely died out and have not been reintroduced since. Sugarcane is chiefly grown in the Birganj, Pirganj, Nawābganj and Patnitolā thānās and in the Khānsāmā outpost.

Tobacco. Tobacco occupies an area of 9,800 acres and is grown principally in the Pārbatipur and Birganj thānās, though small plots of it are to be found in almost every village. It is cultivated almost exclusively for local consumption and little of it is exported. It is grown on high ground and the soil is heavily manured. The quality of the tobacco produced is inferior.

Chillies.

Chillies are an important crop in the Kāliyāganj thānā. The seed is sown in seed beds in October and transplanted in November. Before transplanting, the surface of the land is reduced to a fine tilth by laddering and the seedlings are planted in parallel furrows. They are watered at the time of planting. The chillies ripen in April and are plucked by women and children. Plucking continues till the end of May. After being dried the chillies are sold in the local markets or exported. They are a very profitable crop to grow and there is a great demand for them, especially in the eastern districts of the province.

Other crops.

The only other crops worthy of mention are pulses. Of these the most important are *thākuri*, *arahar* and *mattar*. Birganj, Rānisankoil, Rāiganj, and Kāliyāganj are the thānās in which they are principally grown. *Thākuri* and *mattar* are sometimes sown in the standing winter rice about the end of October and ripen after the rice is cut, but the general practice of turning the cattle and goats loose to graze over the face of the country immediately after the winter rice is cut restricts this practice to a great extent and indeed acts as a serious check on the growing of such cold weather crops generally.

AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS.

A little less than half the area of the district is cultivated. Of the balance 500,000 acres, including the area covered by rivers, *bils* and private *sāl* forests, are not available for cultivation, 237,030 acres is culturable waste other than fallow, while current fallows amount to 505,080 acres. It is thus apparent that there is still considerable room for expansion of cultivation.

EXTENSION OF CULTIVATION.

An accurate estimate of the rate at which cultivation in the district has extended is impossible, as the cultivated area has never been properly ascertained. The Revenue Survey of 1861—63 took no account of cultivated area and the figures given in the annual reports are more or less guess work. It is probable that between the beginning of the last century and the time of the Revenue Survey there was little progress made in this direction as the Revenue Surveyor speaks of large tracts being covered with dense tree and grass jungle infested with wild animals. After the famine of 1873-74 prices of food-grains began to rise and agriculture at once began to assume a more attractive aspect. As the local cultivators were ill suited to the hard work involved in clearing heavy jungle, the manager of a Wards estate made the experiment of importing Sāntāls from the Sāntāl Parganās. The experiment was attended with such success that many zamindārs imitated his example and since then these settlers have been migrating into the district in ever increasing numbers, with the result that these extensive jungle tracts have to a great extent been brought under cultivation, and the cultivated area of the district has been increased by about one-third. It must not be supposed that these Sāntāl settlers retain possession of all the jungle lands they have cleared. The general practice is for the zamindār to settle the lands to be cleared with them for a period of years at a very low rent. At the

expiry of the period, the lands having been brought under cultivation and having greatly gone up in value in consequence, the rent is raised to the level of that of similar lands in the neighbourhood, whereupon the Sāntāls promptly move on to some other spot where uncultivated waste lands are to be had, while the native Bengali cultivators take their place.

IMPROVEMENTS IN AGRICULTURAL PRACTICE.

There has up to date been little or no advance in the direction of improvement in agricultural practice. The reason is partly the universal one in India, the ignorance and conservatism of the cultivators, which renders them so slow to adopt any new crop or method of cultivation, and partly the fact that there has been no systematic effort made to teach them anything new. The attempt made by Mr. Payter in the first half of the last century to introduce improved varieties of sugarcane into the district and the ultimate failure of the experiment has already been described. About 1890 Raja Syamā Shankar Ray of Teotā tried the experiment of growing rheā fibre at Joyganj in Khānsāmā outpost, but for want of a proper decorticator the experiment proved a failure. The enterprising zamindār incurred a loss of some Rs 20,000. The only agricultural improvement, if such it can be called, which has really succeeded in the district is the substitution of the iron sugarcane mill for the primitive wooden machine, with the result that a much larger percentage of juice than before is obtained from the canes. These mills were introduced some 15 or 20 years ago by Messrs. Renwick and Co., a Calcutta engineering firm. To-day this firm has many depôts in the district. The mills are not sold to the cultivators but hired for the season, and after use are returned to the depôt, where they are cleaned and repaired, ready for the next season. Loans under the Land Improvement Loans Act have seldom been granted. In 1897 one such loan of about Rs.1,000 was granted to a landholder for excavating a tank. In the scarcity of 1908-09 a sum of Rs. 28,000 was given out under this Act to a number of landholders all over the district. Of this Rs. 24,000 was for re-excavation of tanks while Rs. 4,000 was spent by one landholder on making an embankment with a sluice gate to bring a considerable area of low-lying inundated land under cultivation. This latter work is perhaps the only one which can be called an agricultural improvement in the strict sense of the term. Its effect has so far been most beneficial.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

The principal cultivated fruits are plantains, mangoes, jack fruit and pineapples. Of plantains there are many varieties, some, such as the *chini champā* and *mālbhog*, being particularly popular and well flavoured. This fruit is grown near every homestead and is an important article in the diet of the people and a necessary part of offerings to gods and in all religious ceremonies. Mango trees are common but generally little trouble is taken in their cultivation and the fruit is ill flavoured and stringy. In the neighbourhood of Dinājpur town and in the Rāiganj and Rānisankoil thānās better

kinds of mangoes are to be found. The best varieties are the *gopālbhog*, *fazli* and *lambā bhāduri*. Jack fruit are almost as common in every village as plantains. They need practically no cultivation and bear heavily. Probably for this reason they, like the plantain, have little market value, though the fruit is freely eaten by all classes. Pineapples are very generally cultivated but are rather poor. There seems to be only one variety grown, a small reddish coloured pine, which varies in size according to the care taken with its cultivation. Large pineapples fetch a very good price, but it is not easy to get them. Other cultivated fruits are pummelos, *pāpiyās*, and *litchis*, of which a few trees may be found here and there in the gardens of the well-to-do. Amongst wild fruits found in the district may be mentioned the tamarind, *boir*, *jām*, *bael*; these fruits are common enough and may often be found growing near villages. The fruit of the first two is eaten cooked with curry or as a chutney; while that of the last two is eaten raw. Cocoanut and betelnut trees are to be found in the district but they bear little or no fruit. Date trees grow wild in considerable numbers in the southern portion of the district, especially in the thānās of Porshā and Gangarāmpur, but the fruit is worthless and is not eaten. These date-palms are commonly tapped for toddy, which is drunk unfermented. The palmyra palm or *tāl* is most commonly found in the thānās of Porshā, Gangārāmpur and Itāhār. The toddy obtained from this tree is generally drunk after fermentation though sometimes it is taken unfermented. Except in the bazars, every homestead or *bāri* has its garden where a large variety of vegetables are grown for home consumption. The principal vegetables grown for the market are brinjal (*baigun*), potato, sweet potato (*sakarkand*), radish (*mulā*), a small arum (*kachu*) and various kinds of cucumbers, gourds, and pumpkins. Brinjals are especially fine and in the Porshā thānā specimens 2 seers in weight are common. Turmeric and onions are grown to some extent and beans (*sim*) and *dāntasāg*, a kind of spinach, are produced for home consumption. *Pātāsāg*, a variety of jute, is used by the lower classes as a vegetable, being eaten young.

CATTLE. The local breed of cattle resembles that in most other parts of the province, being small and stunted. No attempt at systematic breeding is made. There is hardly a good bull in the district, and the sires are the immature uncastrated males running with the herds. The necessity of reserving grazing areas and for growing fodder crops has never been seriously considered. The whole question of cattle breeding has in fact been hitherto ignored. The local cattle, owing to their small size, are unfit for anything but ploughing and are also very poor milkers, a seer of milk per diem being a fair average yield of milk for a cow. The reason why the necessity for improving the local breed of cattle has never apparently come home to the people is that large numbers of fine cart bullocks are annually brought to the big fairs or *melās* from Behār and up-country and sold to local merchants,

traders, and professional carters. The people are thus saved the trouble of breeding their own cart bullocks, while for ploughing purposes they are content with the small animals locally available.

The buffaloes found in the district are generally imported and not bred locally. They are smallish animals of the Behār type and very inferior to the fine buffaloes of the Brahmaputra Valley. They are sometimes used for carting and Sāntāl settlers make use of them for ploughing also. Milch buffaloes are kept in small numbers in the low-lying country on the lower reaches of the Punarbhabā and in the western portion of the Rānisankoil thānā. Goats of a small short-legged type are to be found in every village. They rarely grow to any size. In the cold weather flocks of large castrated goats are imported from Behār and find a ready sale for eating purposes.

POULTRY.

The local poultry are of a small type and belong to no particular breed. They are not bred for the market to any extent nor is there any trade worthy of the name in eggs or poultry. In Kāliyāganj thānā fairly good ducks may be procured.

VETERINARY RELIEF.

Dinājpur does not suffer very much from cattle disease. In the year 1909-10 one outbreak of rinderpest and two of foot-and-mouth disease were reported, but the mortality does not appear to have been heavy. The number of inoculations for rinderpest performed during the year was 100 only. Veterinary relief is afforded at a veterinary dispensary at Dinājpur at which in 1909-10, 5 equines, 15 bovines and 4 other animals were treated as in-patients and 51 equines, 221 bovines and 67 other animals as out-patients. The numbers are very small, but, as the Veterinary Assistant has to spend part of his time in touring, the attendance at the dispensary and hospital is bound to suffer during his absence. In the same year, besides the inoculations for rinderpest, the Veterinary Assistant during his tours in the mofussil treated 873 animals for contagious, and 539 for non-contagious, diseases

CHAPTER VI.

NATURAL CALAMITIES.

CYCLONES.

Dinājpur is in the fortunate position of being remarkably free from natural visitations such as floods, cyclones, and earthquakes. There is a vague tradition that a severe hurricane from the north-east visited the district in November 1787 but nothing is known of the extent of the damage done. There is no record of any cyclone having occurred since then.

FLOODS.

As to floods—though small local ones, caused by the rivers overflowing their banks, are of almost annual occurrence and do more or less damage to crops in particular localities—the only really serious one of which any account has been preserved was that of the 9th July 1892. This appears to have been an inundation from the Ātrāi which by way of the Gāburā and Ghāgrā streams swept down on the town of Dinājpur from the north-east and washed large numbers of the inhabitants of the northern and eastern quarters out of their houses. At one time it seemed likely that the whole of the central portion of the town might be destroyed, but the timely cutting of the Darjeeling road let the water off and relieved the pressure. A dangerous feature of this flood was that it made its first appearance in the evening, and the darkness which ensued added greatly to its terrors. By the exertions of the local officials the people of the quarters most affected were got out of their houses without loss of life and collected in places of safety. Money was distributed to them for their maintenance and to assist them in the rebuilding of their houses. It would seem that the Punarbhabā also was in flood on this occasion, though not to the same extent as the Ātrāi, as we learn that the water level in the former was two feet lower than the level of the flood from the north-east. Any way, the railway line was breached on both sides of the town. On the east the mails had to be transported for some distance by boat while on the west they were carried over the breach, which was apparently of small extent compared with the other, by means of an elephant borrowed from the Mahārājā. An enquiry into the cause of this disastrous flood led to the conclusion that the railway line, which bisects the district from east to west, was in large measure responsible for the damage done, by holding up the flood water coming from the north. To obviate this, the water way was greatly increased with, it would seem, satisfactory results, as no flood worthy of the name has occurred since.

EARTHQUAKES.

Of the many earthquakes of which record has been kept in the last 150 years, with one exception, the effect appears to have

been slight in the Dinājpur district. The exception was the earthquake of 1897, which caused considerable damage to masonry buildings and created something of a panic amongst the inhabitants of the town. The Rājbāri suffered most of all and had to be rebuilt in part, but the *pukkā* houses in the town belonging to several of the zamīndārs were also seriously injured, and the walls of the Judge's and Collector's houses were cracked.

FAMINE. Dinājpur falls within that portion of Northern Bengal, extending from Champāran district on the west to Rangpur on the east, which experience has shown to be liable to famine. The copiousness and regularity of the rainfall in Dinājpur as compared with the more westerly portion of this tract are, however, the cause that real famine, while of frequent occurrence in Behār, is very rare indeed in Dinājpur, though a famine year in the former place is sometimes marked in Dinājpur by a drought accompanied by partial failure of crops, and scarcity and dearness of food-grains.

Scarcity of 1865-66. The first of these scarcities of which any record has been kept occurred in 1865-66, when the price of rice rose to 11 seers to the rupee as compared with 26 seers, the rate in an ordinary year. It seems, however, that this scarcity, for it was hardly more than this, was confined to a comparatively small area and it was not thought necessary to adopt any special measures for the relief of distress.

Famine of 1873-4. In 1873-74 the whole of Northern Bengal from Champāran to Rangpur was visited by a severe famine. The following extract from the opening paragraphs of a minute by the Hon'ble Sir Richard Temple, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, describes the weather conditions which led up to the famine:—"In Bengal and Bihar, after a season of extraordinary heat during May and June of 1873, the rain did not begin till late, that is in July, and even then was scanty. It lasted more or less, but never abundantly, till the end of August, when it for the most part ceased prematurely. Enough had, however, fallen to secure a fair yield of the crops which are reaped in August and September. Little or none fell during the months of September, October, and November, that is during the whole autumnal season, when heavy showers are indispensable for ensuring the maturity of the rice crop of December (the most important of all the crops), and for sowing the crops which are to be reaped in the following spring. As experience showed that the consequences of drought are sometimes averted by rain even at the last moment, hope was not abandoned till the end of October. Not till then could it be seen whether the apprehension of failure of the crops would be realised or not. By that time, however, it became certain that widespread and heavy loss must occur in the December crops; that the sowing of the spring crop must be short; and that the germinating and growing of what had been sown must be jeopardised. The injury to the young spring crops might yet be

repaired, if rain should fall between the end of December and the beginning of February. Fear was chiefly felt for Bihar and for the north part of Bengal, but largely also for all the rest of Bengal save the eastern part in the basin of the Brahmaputra, and the deltaic region in the south, which depends on inundation rather than on rainfall." The expectation of rain in the cold weather was disappointed and the spring crops also came to nothing. By March the people in the affected tracts had eaten up their reserve stock of food-grains and were in a pretty bad way. The stock of rice in the market was quite insufficient for their needs and the grain-dealers were asking exhorbitant prices for it. During the autumn and winter, however, the authorities had not been idle. The local officers had collected information as to the extent of the scarcity and arrangements had been made for importing large stocks of rice from Burma and elsewhere. In April 1874 relief works were opened in Kāliyāganj, Raiganj, Hemtābād, Pirganj, Rānisankail and Thākurgāon thānās, which were the most severely affected. The daily number of labourers employed in these relief works reached the imposing total of 95,000 in May 1874, after which the attendance fell off rapidly. Gratuitous relief on an extensive scale was also resorted to, and, owing to the breakdown of the ordinary machinery of the grain trade, Government depôts for the sale of grain at reasonable rates, to those who had money to purchase it, were opened at Raiganj and several other important centres. By July 1874 the numbers in receipt of gratuitous relief had reached 84,000, though by this time the relief works were almost deserted. The relief works on which the people were employed were chiefly the construction of new roads and the repair of old ones. A large number of tanks also were excavated or re-excavated. The recipients of gratuitous relief were chiefly the beggars, who, at all times a numerous class, were deprived, owing to the scarcity, of the support they usually received from the people themselves, and were thrown on the mercy of Government. The action of the latter in importing and selling grain stimulated the local grain-dealers to renewed activity, and when famine operations had got into working order rice could be purchased in the market at the comparatively reasonable rate of 10 seers to the rupee. From what one can gather from the accounts extant, the Government measures appear to have been fairly effective in dealing with the crisis. There was little, if any, loss of life from starvation, though the lower orders, such as agricultural labourers, coolies, and artizans, endured considerable privations. The money spent by Government on the relief of distress amounted to some Rs. 24,00,000, including the value of rice paid as wages and distributed by way of gratuitous relief. This did not include cash loans to landholders and agriculturists, which were given to some extent, nor the value of the grain which was advanced in large quantities to those who could give security for ultimate payment.

In the years 1891 and 1897 partial failures of crops occurred and the scarcity in the latter year was aggravated by the high prices prevailing elsewhere. On the former occasion Rs. 27,000 was spent on charitable relief from the district funds, while in 1897 Rs. 8,000 was raised by private subscription and most of it spent. Scarcities of 1891 and 1897.

In the autumn of 1908-09 real scarcity again made its appearance in the district. The cause and extent of this are thus described in the opening paragraphs of the Collector's report on the relief operations undertaken in the district: "The last agricultural year, 1908-09, began with good rainfall in May, and both the jute and *bhādoi* looked well, but the promise of a good season disappeared with the long drought which followed in June, July, and August, in consequence of which the *bhādoi* was spoiled and the jute, which was actually a good crop, was almost entirely lost for want of steeping water. The prolonged drought seriously affected the main crop—winter rice. For want of rain transplanting for the most part could not be done, and even the little that had been put out withered for want of moisture. The rain in September was too late to save the situation and the result was a total loss of the winter rice in the thānās of Pirganj, Hemtābād, Rāiganj, Itāhār, and Ghorāghāt, and extensive loss all over the Bālurghāt Sub-division and also in parts of Thākurgāon and Birganj. The following rabi crop was also a failure for want of moisture, except in Kāliyāganj and Gangārāmpur, where a small crop of chillies was obtained. In this district, which is normally prosperous, the total loss of one season's crops would not ordinarily cause a famine or even acute distress but for the fact that the people, accustomed to a succession of good seasons, have become thriftless and extravagant. The real distress was due not so much to a shortage of stocks in the market, which were ample, nor to high prices, but rather to the inability of the people to buy food owing to lack of money and the contraction of credit. The shortage of money is due to the fact that in the previous year when the price of paddy suddenly went up with surprising rapidity to the almost unprecedented figure of Rs. 3-12-0 per maund, the cultivators promptly sold their entire stocks and, in some cases, even seed grain. This shortage was most marked in the *pali* area which is nearer the railway communication and where recurrent crops being possible the *raiyats* had larger stocks. In the *khiār* tracts, where the *raiyats* have practically only one crop (winter rice) to depend on, the sales were not so extensive, and even where stocks had been sold the money was not wasted. It was very different in the *pali* area, where the *raiyats* with the utmost improvidence squandered all their money and the subsequent unforeseen failure of successive crops left them without food-grains or money. It is an important feature that, whereas scarcity was apprehended in the *khiār* tracts and a famine programme of works drawn up for these areas, the greatest distress Scarcity of 1908-09.

was evidenced in the *pali* area and amongst the ordinarily prosperous *raiyats* and most particularly in the neighbourhood of large fairs, several of which are held annually in the district." From the above it is seen that the principal seat of the scarcity was much the same as in 1873-74. There seems indeed little to choose between the two years in the size of the area affected or the extent of the failure of crops, and if on the latter occasion the distress and the Government action necessitated by its relief was much less than before, the reason may be found in the general increase in prosperity amongst the agricultural classes resulting from the high prices for produce obtained in recent years, and in improved communications and better organisation of trade which enabled rice from Burdwān, Bākarganj and Burma to be poured into the district without any interposition on the part of Government. The famine was throughout a money famine. There was a plentiful supply of food-grains in the market to be bought by those who had money to buy, and even at the height of the famine the price of these rose no higher than in ordinary years. As is inevitable in all cases of drought the labouring classes were thrown out of employment, and had no money to buy grain at however reasonable a price. As on the former occasion, too, the beggars were deprived of their customary doles and were thrown on the hands of the Government for support. For the relief of these classes relief works were started in Ghorāghāt, Rāiganj, Itāhār, Hemtābād, Pirganj, and Rānisankail thānās, and gratuitous relief in these thānās and some other parts of the district also. Up till 1st April 1909 the work was done by the District Board with the help of a special grant from Government. From that date on Government itself assumed the responsibility for the operations. Towards the end of April good rain fell and the workers on the relief works began to return to their ordinary work in the fields. After a week or two of continued seasonable weather, it became clear that all danger would soon be over, and, in effect, by the end of May it became possible to stop relief in all but one thānā, Itāhār. Here it was continued for another month, after which all relief operations ceased. Besides favourable weather, the timely distribution of agricultural loans, which stimulated credit and enabled the cultivators to get their fields sown, contributed largely to this satisfactory result. During the prevalence of this scarcity, relief works were not opened in any locality except after careful enquiries to ascertain if they were really required, and gratuitous relief was very sparingly distributed. In both cases the provisions of the Bengal Famine Code were strictly applied. As a result the numbers on relief works never exceeded 7,000, and those in receipt of gratuitous relief never exceeded some 2,000, on any one day, and the total expenditure on the relief of distress was proportionately small. The total cost of relief works was some Rs. 82,000, and of gratuitous relief some Rs. 21,000. Of this expenditure, the major share was borne by

the District Board. Besides this, Government advanced Rs. 1,50,000 in loans to agriculturists under the Agriculturists' Loans Act, and nearly Rs. 30,000 in loans to landholders under the Land Improvement Loans Act. An agreeable feature of this scarcity was the interest shown by some of the zamindārs in the welfare of the *raiyats*. Several of them started relief works on their own account, with or without the help of loans from Government, while others organised committees for the distribution of gratuitous relief with the help of private subscriptions. This was the more to their credit as collections of rent were, as was in the circumstances to be expected, particularly bad. Many of the more well-to-do cultivators also provided work for their fellow-villagers by digging new or re-excavating old tanks with the help of loans obtained from Government under the Land Improvement Loans Act. The timely relief afforded by Government and the District Board, and the plentiful harvests which have since been reaped, have had the effect of enabling the people of the affected tracts to recover very rapidly from the effects of the scarcity, which otherwise, as such visitations often do, might have left its mark on the district for years. In fact, with the exception of unusually heavy arrear balances in the zamindārs' accounts, and a tendency, short-lived I fear, to thrift on the part of the agricultural classes, there is little to recall the hard times of a few years ago.

CHAPTER VII.

RENTS, WAGES AND PRICES.

RENTS.

Owing to the smallness of the population as compared with the area of the district and the amount of cultivable land still remaining unoccupied, the rates of rent paid by *raiyats* holding direct from landlords are very low as compared with the rates prevailing in the neighbouring districts. The district is a permanently settled one, and no general cadastral survey of it has ever been made. It is consequently somewhat difficult to ascertain with accuracy what the prevailing rates of rent are, and quite impossible to calculate the number of holdings or the average area of land per holding. From an examination of the settlement records of 8 small private estates with a total area of 14,369 acres, recently surveyed and settled under the Bengal Tenancy Act, it would appear that the different classes of *raiyats*, the average rent per cultivated acre payable by, and the average size of holding in possession of each class, are as follows:—

Class of cultivator.	Average area of cultivated land per holding.	Average rent per cultivated acre.
	Acres.	Rs. a. p.
Raiyats at fixed rates or fixed rents	7·29	1 13 0
Settled raiyats	3·15	1 15 0
Occupancy	2·54	1 12 0
Non-occupancy	2·30	1 5 0
Under-raiyats	·26	2 15 0
Total ...	3·10	1 15 0

Of *raiyats* holding their land direct from the landlord, by far the largest class are the occupancy *raiyats* or *jotedárs*. Non-occupancy *raiyats* or tenants-at-will are comparatively few, as under the Bengal Tenancy Act the mere fact of having held land in a village for 12 years gives a cultivator occupancy rights in respect of all lands taken up by him in that village, and the landlords seldom put obstacles in the way of their tenants acquiring such rights. The rents quoted are all over rents. Except in the case of under-*raiyats*, no distinction is made in the rent of different

classes of land in a village nor is any account taken of the kind of crop to be grown. The average rate per acre is rather higher in the southern portion of the district than in the northern, being Rs. 2 to Rs. 2-12 as against Re. 1-8 to Rs. 2. The reason for this probably is that the southern portion of the district being mostly *khiār* land was most suitable for winter paddy, at one time the only important crop, and was in consequence more valuable than the northern portion which is mostly *pali*. With the rise in importance of the jute crop the value of the latter class of land has, however, greatly increased and at the present day is quite equal to that of *khiār*. Under-*raiyats*, on the other hand, have to pay very much higher rents, and the rent, when payable in money, varies according to the class of land and the crop grown on it. The rents paid by such under-*raiyats* varies from Re. 1-8 per acre for poor lands to as much as Rs. 20 an acre for the best jute lands. Lands suitable for the cultivation of tobacco sometimes let at as much as Rs. 28 an acre. Under-*raiyats* who pay a money rent are usually termed *chukanidārs*. A numerous class of cultivators, called *ādhiārs*, to whom the term under-*raiyats* is not properly applicable, pay their rent in kind, the *raiyats*, whose land they cultivate, taking half the crop. This procedure works very well in practice, as in a bad year the loss is distributed between the *raiyat* and the *ādhiār*, while in a good one the former shares in the profits. Cultivators holding otherwise than direct from the superior landlord acquire no rights in the land they cultivate, however long they may hold possession of it.

There is a great demand for labourers in the district and in consequence the rates of wages are very high. The causes of this are two-fold. The cultivable area of the district is large as compared with the population, and of recent years the prices of agricultural produce have risen to such an extent that agriculture has become a very profitable occupation. It pays the cultivators to take up large holdings and cultivate them in the main by hired labour. Winter rice, which is by far the most important crop in the district, is commonly harvested by gangs of up-country coolies who get as much as 8 annas a day and their food for this particular work. These are of course immigrant labourers paid at exceptional rates for a particular job, but the ordinary agricultural labourer also is by no means badly off. His wages all the year round work out at something like Rs. 5 a month and his food, as compared with Rs. 2 a month and his food in 1870, a considerable advance, though we must not overlook the fact that the purchasing power of the rupee has decreased somewhat since then. The ordinary cooly, who finds employment at railway stations and in doing odd jobs in towns, gets 6 annas a day while the artisan class also have benefited by the rise in wages and we find common carpenters and masons nowadays not content with less than 10 to 12 annas a day, as compared with half this amount 30 or 40 years ago. Carters are a numerous class in this district. Generally

WAGES.

they own their own carts and bullocks and earn Re. 1 to Re. 1-4 a day as cart hire. When the carter, however, is only a hired man who drives his employer's cart, he gets Rs. 6 to Rs. 7 a month plus his food.

PRICES.

As a result chiefly of the gradual improvement in communications which has taken place in the last 40 or 50 years, the prices of agricultural produce have risen steadily, the rise being most marked after the opening of the railway between 1884 and 1891. The changes in the price of common rice will best illustrate this. To go back to the earliest times of which we have any reliable record, Buchanan Hamilton quotes the average price of common rice in his day (1808) as Re. 1 per maund. The maund referred to contained some 48 seers of 80 tolas. Prices rose considerably during the following half century and the average price in 1861, which was apparently a year of plentiful harvests, is found to be 32 seers to the rupee. In the next ten years there was little change, the average price in 1871 being 31 seers to the rupee. After the famine year of 1874 prices began to show a definite upward tendency. About 22 seers to the rupee seems to have been the average price in an ordinary year, though in 1881 the number of seers purchased for the rupee again reached 32. This now, however, meant a condition of abnormal cheapness. In 1884, which does not seem to have been in the ordinary sense a year of scarcity, the number of seers purchaseable for the rupee had fallen to 15, and during the decade ending 1901 $13\frac{1}{2}$ seers was the average. In 1906, 1907 and 1908 the price of rice reached an abnormally high figure, the average prices being $8\frac{1}{2}$, $7\frac{3}{4}$, and $7\frac{1}{2}$ seers respectively to the rupee. In 1910, which was a year exceptionally favourable to the agriculturist, the average price fell again to $13\frac{1}{4}$ seers to the rupee. It is improbable, however, that this cheap rate will be maintained. The price of rice in years of scarcity further illustrates the influence which improved communications have exerted on prices. In 1865 the average price was 15 seers to the rupee; in 1874, the year of the famine, the price per rupee was 14 seers. In 1897, a year of comparatively scanty harvests, it was $9\frac{1}{2}$ seers per rupee, while in 1908, which in respect of failure of crops might compare with 1874, the price was $7\frac{1}{2}$ seers per rupee. This rise in prices does not affect the cultivating classes, who, except on the rare occasions of a failure of the crops, can grow more than sufficient to supply their own needs, while the good market for their surplus produce makes for their prosperity. To these a year of comparatively short out-turn with high prices is almost as welcome as one of large out-turn with low prices. Landless labourers also share in this prosperity, as work is abundant. It is otherwise with the non-agricultural middle classes, generally known as *bhadralok*, from whose ranks the professions and the Government services are recruited. Notwithstanding higher salaries and improved prospects these are steadily deteriorating in prosperity, and the complaint is general

amongst them that they are worse off than their fathers were on half their income.

MATERIAL CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.

The majority of the population live by agriculture and succeed in making a fairly comfortable living out of it Dinajpur is one of the principal rice-producing districts in the province, and a large portion of the crop is available for export. The crop very rarely fails, and the year 1873-74 is the only year on record in which a serious famine occurred, though partial failures of the crop have happened now and then. On such occasions quantities of rice are imported from Bengal and Burma, and the market price of this staple differs little from the price in ordinary years. A century ago the people generally were both poor and improvident. The only crop in the district worth mentioning was rice, and owing to the low price obtainable for this locally, and to want of facilities for export, the cultivators, though not lacking in food, had little ready money and could seldom afford luxuries. A large portion of the district was under jungle and the profits to be made from agriculture were not sufficient to induce the local cultivators, always averse to hard labour, to go to the trouble of clearing and bringing it under cultivation. At the same time, the prevalent practice of early marriages and their fondness for spending money on these and other ceremonies, led them to involve themselves and their descendants in debt, and frequently reduced them to the most abject poverty. In the course of the succeeding half century, with improved communications and the consequent rise in the price of food-stuffs, especially rice, the condition of the people underwent a change for the better. Major Sherwill, writing about 1860, says:—" The social condition of the agricultural classes has greatly improved of late years by the enhanced value of rice and all other agricultural produce. The ryots are the principal gainers by the unprecedented rise in the price of grain, by which, in many instances, their profits are more than doubled. The zamindārs, the only prosperous section of the community, are also great gainers, on account of waste lands and jungles being brought under cultivation, and the ryots, being in more prosperous circumstances, have increased facility in paying up their rents. Mutations and desertions of ryots are less frequent; in a word, the prospects of all have improved, but still the ryots have no pretension to wealth or affluence. Although not rich, the *raiyats* are more independent, and in easier circumstances than the peasantry of most other nations, and, although often oppressed by the zamindars, who enrich themselves at the expense of the *raiyats,* they still have sufficient to support themselves and families. Few experience the pangs of hunger, as our own countrymen do in times of distress, or during a severe winter. They may wholly abstain from labour for weeks or even months together, and still manage to feed and clothe themselves and families. Their wants are few and easily supplied: rice, dall, salt, oil and tobacco supply them all. They suffer

somewhat from cold at night in December, January and February, but at other seasons of the year they require scarcely any clothing at all." In the fifty years which have elapsed since this was written the material condition of the people has continued steadily to improve. The prices of food-stuffs have continued to rise, trade has expanded, the waste lands of the district have been brought under cultivation by settlers from the Santāl Parganas, Chotā Nāgpur and Behār, and, last but not least, jute has come into prominence as an easily-grown and profitable crop. As a consequence of all this, the number of cultivators who have risen from the position of *raiyats* to that of well-to-do tenure-holders employing hired labour, and from the position of agricultural labourers working for hire to that of *raiyats* with occupancy rights, is very great. Many persons allege, indeed, that the prosperity arising from the large profits made from jute in recent years is largely a fictitious prosperity. There is more money in the country, it is true, but ready cash has brought extravagance in its train and the people are little better off than before. This may be true to a certain extent, but this ready money which the cultivator has at his disposal has been of inestimable benefit to the poorer classes, such as agricultural labourers, metal-workers, etc., as the man who formerly had to do all his work himself, and had little cash to spare for luxuries, can now afford to employ labourers to do a portion at least of his work for him, and to substitute iron and brass utensils for the homely earthen ones he formerly used.

The good prices obtainable nowadays for food-stuffs have induced the cultivators, especially in the northern portion of the district, to abandon the old practice of always keeping a store of rice, sufficient for a year's consumption at least, in hand. After harvesting the winter rice crop, the *raiyat*, tempted by the high price he can get for his produce, and by his need for ready money to pay the rent or spend in the annual fair in the neighbourhood, sells almost his whole out-turn and keeps just sufficient to carry him on for a few months till his next *aus* rice crop is ripe, or till the sale of his jute crop brings him in a good supply of cash. If the *aus* rice or jute crop fails, as sometimes happens, he has then to purchase food for himself and his family at a high price and is reduced to considerable straits to carry on till another food crop is available. With the general increase in prosperity the relations between tenant and landlord have improved. In the early days of the British administration many of the landlords were new men, not of the true zamindār class, and some were foreigners. Such men were naturally out of sympathy with their tenants and rack-renting was common. At the same time the cultivators were poor and had difficulty in paying even a moderate rent, and the desertion of holdings was frequent. At the present day harsh and exacting landlords are rare, and the cultivator, by nature a law-abiding, peaceable creature enough, makes little difficulty about paying his

rent, which, as a rule, is reasonable. When times are bad owing to failure of crops, most landlords have the sense to see that it pays them better to give time to the *raiyats* to pay their rent after the harvesting of the next crop, than to resort to the courts and drive them off the land by selling them up. Litigation, of course, as almost everywhere in India, is too freely resorted to, but the waste of money on this form of amusement is not nearly so great as in many of the districts further east. It must not be supposed that the rise in the prices of agricultural produce has benefited all classes of the community alike. Artisans, merchants, traders and members of the legal profession have shared in the profits of the cultivators. The condition of the zamindārs, on the other hand, is not so good as the increased value of their estates would lead one to expect. Of these some are absentees living in Calcutta and elsewhere, and comparatively few take an intelligent interest in the management of their estates. The result is that their *amlās* grow rich at their expense, while the lavish expenditure considered necessary on the occasion of marriages or other ceremonies, together with the waste of money on litigation, have involved many, who should otherwise be well to do, in debt. The professional classes, too, to which the ministerial and other officers of Government belong, are the reverse of prosperous. The reason is that while salaries have increased little, if at all, in the last fifty years, the cost of living has gone up enormously, and the competition which has sprung up for posts of every kind has necessitated an expenditure on the education of their children undreamt of in their grandfathers' time.

Dwellings. The style of house in which the cultivator lives is still simple and primitive in the extreme. His living house or hut is constructed sometimes on a raised earthen plinth and sometimes on the ground, with wooden or bamboo posts, bamboo mat walls, and a thatched roof. Such partitions as there may be inside are of bamboo matting, and the rafters and crosspieces are generally of bamboo. The cook-house and other out-houses are grouped about the living house to form a homestead or *bāri*, and not infrequently the inner premises are surrounded with a high fence of split bamboo. In parts of the district where suitable earth is obtainable or the inhabitants are foreigners from the west, the walls of the houses are built of mud. Occasionally a well-to-do cultivator or a small tenure-holder has a more pretentious dwelling with corrugated iron roof and mud-plastered walls, and merchants and *mahājans* commonly have houses of this kind. The land-holders mostly live in old-fashioned *dalāns* or masonry buildings surrounded by the huts of their retainers and by, perhaps, a family temple or two. Here and there a zamindār may be found living in a more modern building of semi-European pattern, erected probably at one time or another when the estate was under the management of the Court of Wards. With the exception of the few ancient buildings still in use as places of worship, mosques and temples are built

in the most ordinary style and have no pretensions to beauty. They are commonly constructed of masonry or sun-dried bricks, mud-plastered and whitewashed, and have sometimes corrugated iron roofs.

Furniture.

The furniture in the ordinary cultivator's house is neither costly nor complicated. It consists of some brass utensils, such as plates (*thālā*), cups (*bāti*), pots (*lotā*), some sleeping mats and coarse quilts and some earthen cooking vessels. The poorer sort sleep on the ground and the more affluent on bamboo *machāns*, or *chārpoys.* In the *bāzārs* enamelled iron is rapidly taking the place of brass for plates and drinking vessels, as being cheaper and cleaner though not so lasting. Here, too, the ubiquitous kerosene oil tin is put to a variety of uses, chief among which is carrying or storing water. Every better class house is provided with a *baithakhānā* or reception room, in which the master of the house entertains visitors, furnished with mats and low wooden stools, and perhaps a chair or two, and many of the land-holders and gentry have European furniture in their houses, and use tables, chairs, beds, dressing tables, etc.

Food.

The diet of the people is largely a vegetable one, and consists principally of rice, pulses, vegetables, chillies, and salt. The flesh of fowls, pigeons, goats, and sheep is occasionally eaten by the Muhammadans, and that of goats and ducks by the Hindus. The low class Hindus and Santāls sometimes keep and eat pigs. Mustard oil is in general use for cooking. Sweetmeats made of sugar and *ghi*, and milk in various forms, such as curds (*dahi*), are consumed by all classes that can afford them. Fresh fish is not everywhere available and there is no great consumption of dried fish, which forms such a staple article of diet in some parts of the country. Most villagers grow their own vegetable, such as brinjals, pumpkins, yams, beans, and radishes, and a few plantain trees are a necessary adjunct to every homestead. Plantain pulp mixed with milk is frequently given to infants and forms a palatable and nourishing food. All classes chew *pān*, a mixture of areca-nut, catechu, and lime wrapped up in *pān* or betel leaves. Amongst the lower orders tobacco is sometimes added to the mixture. Opium and *ganja* are used for smoking, the former chiefly by the indigenous and the latter by the foreign population.

Dress.

Amongst the lower orders, both Hindus and Muhammadans, dress in much the same style, in *dhoti* and *chadar*, but the large and growing sect of Nāyā Musulmāns, found scattered all over the district, affect a kind of *lungi* or cloth worn round the waist and reaching halfway down the calf. This is generally of a red check pattern and is surmounted by a short jacket or coat. Many of these people wear a fez. Both Hindu and Muhammadan women wear a single coarse cloth called *chauthā* wound round the body above the breasts and reaching to the calf of the leg. Sometimes, however, two cloths are worn, one reaching from the waist to the calf and the other round the upper part of the body. As a rule,

nothing is worn on the head. Amongst the many Behāris in this district the cloth, called *sāri*, is longer and looser and is so arranged at the waist as to have heavy pleats in front. The Santāl women wear a similar cloth, but of a much more skimpy description. It barely reaches to their knees and one end of it is flung over one shoulder and across the breast from behind. This garment is either entirely red in colour or has a red border. The Paliyā and Rājbansi women wear their cloth, generally a coarse cotton one of local manufacture, in much the same fashion as the Mech and Kachāri women of Assam, *viz.*, wound once round the body and folded across the breast. The end is tucked in at the side. It has an ugly and slovenly appearance and the cloth requires constant re-folding and tucking in. Sometimes the ends of it are sewn together and the garment slipped over the head like a sort of petticoat. Women of the cultivating classes, with the exception of Behāri women, do not wear much in the way of jewellery, but in the *bāzārs* a variety of silver ornaments, such as bangles, armlets, finger, toe, nose, and ear-rings, waist-bands, and anklets may be seen. Gold jewellery is not much in evidence. The men of all classes carry umbrellas, and large hats made of split bamboo with immense brims are in common use amongst the labourers in the fields to protect them from sun and rain. In Dinājpur town and some of the larger villages the better classes of Hindus wear the semi-European dress peculiar to the *bhadralok* all over Bengal. This consists of shoes and socks, the former of European pattern but usually of native manufacture, a loose *dhoti* almost touching the ground in front, a light coat of silk alpaca, or cotton, and a *chadar*, often of brilliant hue, thrown round the neck and shoulders. Muhammadan gentlemen generally wear a long-skirted coat buttoned to the throat in front, tight cotton trowsers, and a fez.

CHAPTER VIII.

OCCUPATIONS, MANUFACTURES AND TRADE.

OCCUPATIONS.

The district is almost entirely agricultural. In the Census of 1911 it was found that no less than 1,538,033 or 91 per cent. of the total population were dependent on agriculture. Of these 34 per cent. are actual workers The fact that the proportion of rent-payers to rent-receivers is as 150 to 1 indicates that estates are large and landlords few in number. Industries are of little importance and only 3 per cent. of the population are supported by them, while only 34,000 persons all told are engaged in commerce. Under one per cent. of the population belong to the professional classes, a very small percentage compared with other Eastern Bengal districts. With such a large agricultural population there are only 173,565 field labourers, which explains to some extent why so much imported labour is required for harvesting. Of those engaged in industrial pursuits, paddy huskers and pounders, who are nearly all cooly women from Behār or the Santāl Parganās, are the most numerous (10,000). Next come earth-workers (6,700), fishermen and fish dealers (9,000), and grain and pulse dealers and grain parchers (6,000). There are two fish dealers to one fisherman, which is not a matter for surprise, as most of the fish is imported by train and sold in the local bāzārs and markets by men and women of the Hāri caste. Basket and mat makers number 5,300, cotton weavers 6,000, jute spinners and weavers 750 and makers and sellers of pottery 4,765. Most other occupations are poorly represented, and the number of persons engaged in the professions, such as law, medicine, education, etc., is very few compared with the total population. Priests number 1,300 and religious mendicants 54, of whom 18 are women ; but these figures exclude Bairagis and Baishnabs who are professional beggars. A fair proportion of the latter are women. Besides having almost a monopoly of rice-husking, women take an important share in basket and mat making, grain dealing and parching, and gunny-making. General labourers number 12,000, of whom some 5,000 are women. Amongst the indigenous population women take little share in the heavier agricultural operations. Transplanting of rice, which in some parts of the country is regarded as women's work, is here done by men, except amongst the Santāl settlers. The women of these latter work nearly as hard as the men. Women of all the cultivating classes help in harvesting of paddy and to some extent in weeding. Something has already been said of the share taken by women in certain industrial pursuits. Generally it may be said that foreign women of the labouring classes actively assist their

male relatives in the actual work of production, while those of local origin assist them not so much in production as in disposing of the finished product. A visit to any market in the interior will show that the majority of vendors are women of agricultural and allied castes, amongst whom Rājbansi women will generally be found to predominate.

MANUFACTURES. Factories.

Manufacture, in the general meaning of the term, on anything like a large scale, is practically non-existent. There is only one factory, within the meaning of the Factories Act, in the district. This is a jute press, owned by Ralli Brothers, at Raiganj, which is worked by an oil-engine of small power, and turns out *kaccha* bales of $3\frac{1}{2}$ maunds in weight for the Calcutta market. The number of operatives employed is between 50 and 100, all up-country coolies of a low class. There is a small jute press at Khānsāmā where, however, a much smaller number of workers is employed. This is owned by a Bengali firm. Besides this there are two oil-presses for the manufacture of mustard oil, one at Pulhāt in Dinājpur town, and the other at Parbatipur, employing some 10 and 30 hands respectively. These are more properly oil mills, as the oil is extracted by iron mills worked by machinery, and not by presses. Both of them are owned by Marwāri merchants. A candle and pencil factory has recently been started in the town. The candles, which are of a rather inferior quality, are sold in the *bāzār*. Pencil-making has not yet been begun. Only a few hands are employed so far.

Rice-husking.

Rice-husking was at one time a fairly important industry when large quantities of cleaned rice were prepared by local grain-dealers at the principal grain marts for export to Calcutta and elsewhere. The method of husking employed is the indigenous one in use in every cultivator's household in which the *dhenki* or pounder, a heavy wooden beam, worked with the foot, plays an important part. This method is so familiar as hardly to require description. The workers are almost entirely up-country cooly women. The system is crude, tedious, and expensive, and the rice produced is by no means free from impurities. The paddy is sometimes boiled before husking and sometimes simply dried in the sun. The cost of production varies from 10 annas a maund for boiled to 11 annas for unboiled rice. The time taken for one person to husk a maund of rice is some 21 hours. Of late years this industry has greatly declined in importance, as nowadays rice is most commonly exported unhusked, the husking process being performed elsewhere by machinery at a greatly reduced cost. The principal centres at which this industry is still carried on to any extent are Nithpur, Bālurghāt, Nāyā Bāzār and Samjhiā.

Sugar-pressing.

The manufacture of jaggery or *gur* from sugar-cane is carried on on an extensive scale, almost throughout the district. The crushing of the cane and boiling of the juice to make the *gur* is done by the cultivators themselves. The wooden mills which were formerly used for crushing the cane have been entirely

superseded in recent years by iron mills manufactured by Messrs. Renwick and Co. of Kushtia. This firm has depôts at various centres, and hires mills to the cultivators for the cane-crushing season. At the end of this, the mills are collected, cleaned, and repaired in preparation for the next season's work. The mills hired out are mostly 3-roller mills, though some 2-roller mills are still in use. It has been found that a greater quantity of juice can be obtained by the use of the former. The amount of juice expressed by a 3-roller mill is some 60 per cent. of the weight of cane and the rate of hire comes to about Re. 1 per diem. The usual practice is for several families to combine to hire a mill between them, thus reducing the cost and ensuring a sufficient supply of cane to keep the mill fully employed. A mill is worked by a pair of bullocks walking in a circle. The juice is boiled in deep iron pans, the refuse cane, after it has been squeezed dry, being used as fuel for the fire. The shallow iron pans which are beginning to come into use in some districts, and which make a better quality of *gur*, have not reached this district yet. The deep iron pans are of local manufacture. The finished product is a dark thick fluid, which is poured into earthen jars in which it is allowed to solidify. Most of the *gur* manufactured is consumed locally, this kind of raw sugar being a staple article of diet amongst the people of the district, and being largely consumed in the form of sweetmeats. It is also made on a commercial scale in the Birganj, Pirganj, and Patnitolā thānās, and is exported by boat to Faridpur, Dāccā and other eastern districts and by cart to Rájshāhi and Māldā.

Fisheries.

There is reason to believe that at one time Dinājpur was a great country for fish. It was known, indeed, in ancient times as Matsya Desha or the Fish Country, though whether this name had anything to do with the supply of fish, or was derived from the fact that a mermaid or fish goddess was worshipped by the aborigines, is open to question. Of recent years, owing, it is said, to the silting up of the rivers, the supply of fish has become scanty in the extreme, and fishing has become a very minor industry. I am inclined to think that the change in the habits of the inhabitants has had something to do with this result. Large numbers of Rājbansis who formerly followed fishing as an occupation have now taken to agriculture, as both more profitable and more respectable. The number of fishermen is now very small and their methods primitive, and there is reason to suppose that if more trouble were taken and more up-to-date methods adopted, much more might be made of the indigenous fisheries. The principal of these are situated in the west of the district, and the only market of any size for fish locally caught is Durgāpur, in the jurisdiction of the Itāhār out-post. Fish are brought to this centre from the neighbouring rivers and *bils* and even from Māldā, and are exported to other parts of the district. The fisheries are all the property of zamindārs and are leased out annually to the fishermen. The income derived from this source is, however,

small. During the course of an enquiry made in 1908 into the fish supply of the province it was estimated that the total annual catch of fish in the district might be some 7,000 or 8,000 maunds, a very small amount, considering the area covered by rivers and *bils*. The fishermen mostly belong to the Mālo, Nāmāsudra, and Hāri castes and most of them have some connection with agriculture. The fishing boats in use are the *dongā*, a small dugout, and the *dinghi*, a larger plank-built boat, and the capture of fish is carried on with various kinds of seine, dip, and casting nets as well as with bamboo traps, fishspears, etc. Little attention is paid to the systematic breeding of fish, though whenever a new tank of any size is dug, it is usually stocked with fish spawn. Fine specimens of carp are to be found in the private tanks of some of the zamindārs and in some of the old tanks or *dighis* fish of large size are to be had, though they are seldom caught. In the slack season for cultivation, when they have plenty of time on their hands, the cultivators generally catch fish for their own consumption and it is a common sight to see all the able-bodied men and boys in a village attacking some shallow tank or *bil* armed with nets and traps of all sorts. On such occasions very few fish, however small, escape. Besides the actual fishermen, who deal with the indigenous fish supply, there is a much larger class whose occupation it is to distribute the imported fish supply. This is brought daily by passenger train in considerable quantities from other districts, and crowds of men and women may be seen surrounding the guard's van at wayside stations and carrying away baskets of fish to sell in the local markets and bazārs. These fish sellers mostly belong to the Hāri caste.

Weaving.

Weaving may be regarded as one of the industries of the district, though the number of professional weavers is now very small, and few of them are entirely dependent on weaving for a means of livelihood. A kind of coarse cloth (*photā*), of jute and cotton mixed, is manufactured for home use by Rājbansi women all over the district. Women of the cultivating classes commonly wear cloths of this material, though the men often prefer cloth of foreign manufacture. The professional weavers are Tāntis (Hindus), Jugis (Hindus), and Jolāhās (Muhammadans). The principal product is a coarse cotton cloth, made with imported yarn which is little superior to *photā* and compares very unfavourably in appearance and evenness of texture with the imported Manchester cloth, though it is undoubtedly more lasting. There is little demand for such cloth nowadays and the price to be obtained for it is low. The principal weaving centres are in the Bāliyādangi and Chirirbandar out-posts, though weaving is carried on to some extent in the neighbourhood of Itāhār, where cloth of somewhat finer texture is made, one kind, a coarse muslin, being exported to other districts for use as mosquito-netting. The loom in use is the old hand loom, and no systematic attempt has so far been made to introduce improved methods of weaving amongst the

weavers of the district, and it is more than doubtful, professional weavers being now so few in numbers and agriculture being so profitable, whether any such attempt is worth making or would be attended with success. The Swadeshi movement for the encouragement of indigenous industries was never very active in Dināpjur, and the somewhat increased demand which arose a few years ago for the products of Indian weavers does not seem to have benefited the local weavers much. The reason probably was that this demand began and ended with the *bhadralok* class, who had little use for the coarse material which these latter could supply.

Mat and basket making.

The mats and baskets in general use all over the district are mostly made by Doms, though a few Santāls also employ their leisure in this sort of work. The matting used for walls, ceilings, and floors of houses, compound fences, boat roofs and cart covers is made of lengths of split bamboo woven cross-wise, and is both cheap and serviceable. It is called *chātāi*. Baskets also are generally made of split bamboo, though cane is sometimes employed for finer work. These baskets are of many kinds and play an important part in the daily life and domestic economy of the people. Different kinds of baskets are used for carrying earth or manure, provisions, fruit and vegetables, washing rice, and many other purposes. The finest examples of the work of Doms are the large closely woven baskets used for storing grain, and the hemispherical baskets of different sizes, called *dons*, universally used as grain measures. Small stools (*morā*) and cart covers (*chhai*) of matting and bamboo are also made by these people. In the Rānisankail thānā grass matting is made on a considerable scale for sale in the district, and is even exported to some extent. This resembles Calcutta matting, though hardly as fine, and there is a considerable demand for it amongst the well-to-do classes.

Other industries.

The above, such as they are, are the principal industries in the district. Other very minor industries may be briefly mentioned. A good deal of coarse gunny cloth is woven from jute in the Bāliyādangi and Atwāri out-posts and is exported in the form of bags to Calcutta. Earthenware utensils of various kinds and well-rings are manufactured by potters all over the district for local use. There is little beauty or finish about these wares and no export trade in them. Agricultural implements, cooking utensils, tools and other articles used in various handicrafts are manufactured by the blacksmiths to be found in every large village. These persons are generally Hindus and also agriculturists. Their work is not remarkable for style or finish but they find a ready sale for it, especially in the big annual fairs, where large numbers of them may be seen hard at work. Endi silk cocoons are reared on a very small scale in Birganj and Khānsāmā. The endi cloth woven from these is of tolerable quality and suitable for making clothing, but there is, properly speaking, no trade in this material, the cloth being made to order as is the case in some parts of Assam.

TRADE. Exports.

The chief articles of trade are rice, husked and unhusked, and jute. Fairly accurate figures are available for the latter, which is exported almost entirely by rail. As regards rice the trade in this article which is carried by river in country boats escapes registration. This, though hardly as great as the trade carried by rail, is still considerable. In 1909-10 nearly four lakhs of maunds of unhusked and 1,78,000 maunds of husked rice were exported by rail. If we take the export by boat to have been, say, two-thirds of this, we bring the total exports of rice in the husk in that year up to some 6½ lakhs of maunds and of rice not in the husk to some 3 lakhs of maunds, or a total of 9½ lakhs of maunds altogether. Owing to the failure of the winter rice crop in the preceding year, the exports in 1909-10 were, however, somewhat below normal, and it would be a very reasonable estimate to put the total exports of rice husked and unhusked at about 12 lakhs of maunds in a normal year. Thirty years ago the bulk of the exports of rice from Dinājpur went to Calcutta *viâ* the Ganges and Hooghly. Of recent years this city has been getting her supplies from nearer home, and from Burma, and the Dinājpur rice goes chiefly up-country, to Behār and the United Provinces, and to the eastern districts, Faridpur, Dāccā, and Mymensingh. The exports of jute in 1909-10 were 3,72,000 maunds, nearly the whole of which was carried by rail to Calcutta, only a very small proportion going elsewhere. The only other exports of any importance were rape and mustard seed (25,000 maunds), raw hides (25,000), and tobacco (20,000 maunds). Nearly the whole of the exports of the two former go to Calcutta, while tobacco goes chiefly to the eastern districts, where it is used for *hookā* smoking. Rice, the staple crop, is exported to a greater or less extent from every important mart in the district, and every railway station is a collecting centre for it. The principal trade in this article, however, is carried on at Dinājpur, in the Pulhāt quarter of which are several large grain *golās*, and at several centres in the south of the district, most of them situated on the banks of one or other of the larger rivers. These marts are called *bandars*, the original meaning of which is *port*, a fact which indicates that in early days all centres of trade were situated on a river, there being no other means of communication. The term has now come to be applied to any trade centre wherever situated. The principal of these centres are Chāndganj, Samjhiā, Fakirganj, Kumārganj, Patirām, Bālurghāt, Dāngirhāt, and Rangāmati on the Ātrāi, Pātherghāt, Nāyā Bāzār, and Nithpur on the Punarbhabā and Ghorāghāt on the Karatoyā. All of these export rice southwards by boat, as well as by rail to the nearest railway station. Rāiganj, Gareyā, Khānsāmā, and Lāhirihāt are the principal marts from which jute is exported. A certain proportion of the bales exported from Rāiganj and Khānsāmā are machine made. Elsewhere all the baling is done by hand or by simple hand-worked presses. The jute is collected in the villages by *bepāris*

or middlemen, who again sell it to the *mahājans* at the collecting centres. These latter export it to Calcutta. Jute from Gareyā is carried by cart to Nilphāmāri and Darwāni railway stations in the Rangpur district, that from Khānsāmā to Darwāni, that from Lahirihāt to Kishenganj in the Purneā district, while Rāiganj is itself a railway station. As regards other exports, mustard seed is exported by road and rail principally from Rāiganj and Kāliyāganj in the western portion of the district, hides from Rāiganj and tobacco from Chirirbandar, Pākerhāt and Khānsāmā in the direction of Rangpur. There is a considerable export of chillies from Kāliyāganj railway station to the eastern districts.

Imports. In 1909-10 some 2 lakhs of maunds of rice husked and unhusked were imported, over a lakh of which, much of it Burma rice, came from Calcutta. A very important import was salt (170,000 maunds), and other noticeable imports were kerosene oil (48,000 maunds), refined sugar (23,000 maunds), *gur* (18,000 maunds), European piece-goods (21,000 maunds), iron and steel (27,000 maunds), and betel nuts (14,000 maunds). Jute to the extent of 60,000 maunds was imported to some of the larger centres for re-export. Of the above salt, refined sugar, iron and steel, and European piece-goods came almost exclusively from Calcutta. The figures given represent imports by rail. Goods of all sorts but especially pulses are imported by boat, but it is impossible to estimate with any accuracy the amount of this trade. In the dry season enormous numbers of cart bullocks are imported by road from the Behār districts, and also sheep and goats in small numbers from Behār and the United Provinces, camels and fat tailed sheep from the Punjab, elephants from the Darjeeling Terai and Assam, and ponies from Bhutān and Behār. The value of the cattle alone represents a very large sum, a pair of bullocks fetching anything from Rs. 100 to Rs. 200, and an exceptionally good pair, fit for *shāmpani* use, Rs. 300.

Markets and fairs. Most of the internal trade of the district is carried on at the local markets or *hāts*, situated in central spots at a distance of a few miles from each other. The market usually consists of several permanent shops and an open space close to them, where vendors from the neighbouring villages and petty traders from a distance sit to dispose of their wares. This open space is often provided with temporary sheds or booths with sheet iron or thatch roofs, to protect the vendors from sun and rain. The markets belong to the local zamīndārs who charge a small fee for permission to sell there. Sometime this fee is collected by the zamindārs' *amlās* and sometimes the right of collecting it is leased out to middlemen called *ijāradārs* or *thikādārs*. It is the duty of the proprietor or *ijāradār* to see that the surroundings of the market are kept reasonably clean and well drained and that order is preserved. In the early Company days complaints of the exorbitant tolls levied by the zamindārs from those using the markets, on the pretence of preserving order,

were many. In some cases indeed the proprietors' rapacity was such that the markets were deserted. As a consequence of this, Lord Cornwallis, when Governor-General, passed an order declaring the markets free and forbidding the zamindārs to levy tolls from the vendors using them. The markets were placed under the protection of the *dārogā* of the police division in which they were held. The latter or some responsible member of his staff, was supposed to attend the markets under his charge on every market day. This arrangement proved not altogether successful as the *hāts* were too numerous and too frequently held for the police to exercise proper supervision in them, and not only were disputes between vendors and purchasers frequent, but it was also alleged that the people had fallen out of the frying-pan into the fire, as the police were more rapacious than their predecessors the zamindārs. The old system has long since been reverted to and seems to work well enough. At all events, when complaints are made, as they occasionally are, that the tolls levied are excessive, the complaint is generally directed against an *ijāradār* and not against the zamindār himself, and a reference to the latter generally brings about an amicable settlement of the difficulty. Markets are commonly held twice a week. A visitor to one of them will see a large variety of country produce such as rice, fish, various preparations of milk, *gur*, tobacco, mats, earthen pots, etc., exposed for sale, as well as imported goods such as salt, cotton piece-goods, and cheap cutlery. The weekly or bi-weekly market, besides being a place where trade is carried on, is an essential part of the social life of the people. Here the cultivators from the surrounding villages, when not too busy with agricultural operations, meet to chat with their neighbours about the prospects of the next harvest, the character of the patwāri, the methods of the *dārogā*, and other matters of local interest, and quite a considerable proportion of the persons attending the *hāt* have no intention either of buying or selling anything. It is here that the police officer in search of a clue to the perpetrator of some crime often obtains valuable information, while holding friendly converse with casual acquaintances. As already indicated the number of markets or *hāts* in the district is very large but perhaps the most important are Binnākuri, Bochāganj, Bālurghāt, Bindole, Dinājpur Railbāzār, Dhankoil, Darail, Durgāpur, Gareyā, Harirāmpur, Kāhārole, Lāhiri, Mahārājāhāt, Nithpur, Nāyābāzār, Pākerhāt, Patirāj, Rāiganj, Shibganj, and Sapāhār.

Some mention has already been made of the fairs or *melās*, of which no less than 47 are held annually. There is reason to believe that the older fairs were originally religious gatherings, and most of them are held on the occasion of some festival either Hindu or Muhammadan. Nowadays they are held to all intents and purposes for commercial purposes only, though the worship of some god or Muhammadan saint may or may not be associated with the opening of the fair. This is held on the land and under the auspices

of some zamindār who is accepted as the proprietor of the fair and whose right to levy tolls from vendors using the *melā*-ground is never questioned. As in the case of markets, such tolls are collected either by the servants of the proprietor, or the right to collect them is leased to an *ijāradār* or middleman. *Melās* are recognised by Government and a zamindār wishing to start a new one generally applies to the district officer to have the *melā* registered. Disputes sometimes arise between rival zamindārs as to the dates on which the fairs of each should be held and sometimes attempts are made by the proprietor of a new *melā* to tempt the shop-keepers away from that of his rival by opening his fair before the other has come to an end. In such a case a reference is made to the district officer who endeavours, not always successfully, to settle the dispute to the satisfaction of both parties. A proprietor of a fair is held responsible by Government for providing a sufficient water-supply and making proper sanitary arrangements on the *melā*-ground. In the case of the larger fairs one or more properly qualified medical practitioners and a host of sweepers must be engaged, and a small charitable dispensary and cholera camp opened. If an outbreak of cholera occurs the fair is immediately closed by order of a magistrate. On the occasion of the holding of the big Alowākhowā and Nekmarad fairs several police officers and a force of constables take up their quarters on the *melā*-ground, the proprietors being expected to provide suitable accommodation for them as well as a building to serve as a lock-up. Something has already been said about the cattle and other livestock brought to these fairs for sale. It is from the tolls levied on the sale of these that the proprietor of the fair derives his principal profit. These tolls vary from Rs. 4 for each elephant sold to Re. 0-8-0 for each sheep. The usual fee for each bullock sold is Re. 1. Besides the space given up to the accommodation of livestock each of the larger fairs contains several streets of temporary shops where every kind of article likely to tempt the rustic mind is displayed to the best advantage. A complete list of such goods would take up too much space, but rugs, *dharis*, shawls, coats, caps, blankets, *saris*, shoes, hardware, cutlery, pottery, mats, baskets, and sweetmeats may be mentioned. These gatherings are sometimes attended by *nautch* and singing parties, either on their own account, or engaged by the proprietor for the amusement of the people. Even the bioscope is not unknown, and attracts crowds of interested spectators. In a year of good harvests or of exceptionally high prices, when the cultivators have plenty of money in their pockets, the trade carried on at one of these fairs is considerable and the proprietor's profits correspondingly great. These profits amount sometimes to as much as Rs. 15,000, after deducting all expenses incidental to the holding of the fair.

CHAPTER IX.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

Development of communication.

There is reason to believe that in the days of Muhammadan rule the southern portion of the district was fairly well provided with roads. These warlike conquerors were in the habit of making broad military roads to all portions of their dominions and keeping them in repair by the labour of the subject peoples. One of these roads ran from Damdamā or Gangarāmpur to Ghorāghāt, thus connecting two important military stations. It is said to have been a fine road in its day and to have formed the basis of the present District Board road from Gangarāmpur to Ghorāghāt *viâ* Patirāmpur and Hilli. After the decline of the Muhammadan power the roads made by them were allowed to go to ruin. It does not appear that the Hindu rulers, who probably travelled mostly by boat or on elephants, ever troubled themselves much about making roads through their possessions. A hundred years ago there were hardly any of these in the district. It is true that in Major Rennell's map and in his list of the Roads in Bengal and Behār, published in 1777 and 1781 respectively, a large number of roads are shown as leading from Dinājpur town to various places, but it seems that most of these merely existed on paper. The only roads, worthy of the name, which actually existed, were the roads communicating with the capitals of other districts, and these were constructed by the early British Collectors with the aid of convict labour. They are said to have been fine broad roads, but were totally unbridged and probably most of them more or less impassable during the rainy season. As a consequence of the lack of roads for commerce, this was mostly carried on by boats in the rains. At this season there was a considerable export of rice to Calcutta and Murshidābād by means of large country boats while small boats, of all kinds plied by way of the streams and *khāls* between the big *bāzārs* and the villages in the interior. In the dry season such trade as existed was carried by pack bullocks over fair-weather tracks through the fields or straight across country. Carts were non-existent except in Dinājpur town, and only plied in its vicinity or along the high roads leading to the head-quarters stations of the neighbouring districts. The land-holders through whose lands these roads ran were bound to provide ferries for the use of the public, but we read that the ferry-boats were very bad and accidents frequent. Fifty years later some improvement is noticeable, though communications still appear to have been in a rather imperfect state. The Revenue Surveyor's account of the roads as he found them may appropriately be quoted: "The district is not famous for good roads. The principal thoroughfare is the Darjeeling high road,

which traverses the entire district from north to south and connects the Sikkim-Himālaya mountains with the great Gangetic Valley. This line of road has been well chosen. From the Ganges to Kantnuggur on the Pooranababa (or Dhapa), a distance of 100 miles, there is no *nullah* of any importance. It is a raised earthen road, kept in good repair, and is practicable at all seasons for wheeled carriage, except the worst part of the rains. The small water-courses are bridged over. This used to be the road taken by *dâk* travellers proceeding from Calcutta to Darjeeling; but since the opening of the railway to Rajmahal and Monghyr, it is nearly deserted for the more direct road *viâ* Carragola Ghat and Purneah high road. There are also three branch roads lead-from Dinajpur to Maldah, Rungpore, and Bograh, which are kept in repair by the Ferry Fund, and are average fair-weather roads. The latter, which is essentially a Dinajpur road, is only just completed, and the community are mainly indebted to the untiring exertions of Mr. G. R Payter for its completion. It promises to become of great utility in opening up the communication with Bograh. The northern half of the Division abounds in numerous moderately good bye-roads, but the total absence in many parts of the southern pergunnahs of anything resembling a road or even a foot-path is very striking. The partition ridges of earth raised between the rice fields are often the only means of communicating with the neighbouring villages. In these parts carts are unknown, and the only means of transporting baggage across country is on elephants; and this is rendered difficult from the numerous bheels, water-cuts, rivers, and ditches, which are everywhere encountered. Where water communication is so abundant during the rains little inconvenience is experienced by the inhabitants from the absence of roads. The remains of a high road from Maldah to Ghoraghat, said to have been made many years ago by Baum Rajah, and called 'Jangal', can still be traced in many places, but is overgrown with jungles, totally obliterated in some places, and in total disuse. In several parts of the district, particularly in the north, the level nature of the country admits of fine-weather cart roads being extemporised by merely cutting away the raised divisions of earth between the paddy fields, by which grain is conveyed to the granaries on the rivers. There is another road leading from Dinajpur *viâ* Hurreepoor to Kishengunge, in Purneah, which is not kept in good repair; another leads from the latter place *viâ* Raigaunge to Maldah, which traverses the western portion of the district. In the north of the district all the Thannas are connected by moderately good fair-weather roads." The Mr. Payter referred to in the above extract was the farmer of Government khās mahals of considerable extent in Bogrā. The old road called "Jungal" ascribed to Bān Rājā had probably nothing to do with that prince, being instead the remains of the Muhammadan military road through the south of the district previously referred to.

The district is now well provided with roads connecting the various important centres with head-quarters or with the railway line. In 1909-10 the total mileage of roads maintained by the District Board, not counting village roads, was 993. Besides these there is a considerable mileage of village roads more or less practicable for carts in the cold weather and which at all seasons afford a means to foot passengers of getting about. These are repaired from time to time either by some zamindār or large tenure-holder, or at the cost of the District Board, if the repairs are considered as urgently necessary and a little money is available. None of the roads in the district, with the exception of a few miles in Dinājpur town, Pārbatipur, and Phulbāri, and a small portion of the Bālurghāt-Hilli road are pukka and it can scarcely be said that they are kept in a good state of repair. The District Board does its best, but the money available for communications is quite insufficient, amounting in 1909-10 to some Rs. 50 per mile excluding original works, and in consequence the roads are apt to be deep in dust in the cold weather and sloughs of despond in the rains. Most of them are fairly well provided with bridges of a permanent nature, though this improvement was only effected a few years ago at a cost to the District Board of incurring a heavy debt. Water communications are not what they were 100 years ago, as the principal rivers have been steadily silting up, and as roads and railways will form the principal means of communication throughout the year in the future, it is of the utmost importance that something should soon be done to improve the former.

PRINCIPAL ROADS. Murshidabad Road.

This runs almost due north from Godāgāri on the bank of the Ganges and passes through the entire length of the Rājshāhi and Dinājpur districts and a corner of Māldā. It enters Dinājpur district near the village of Khātirpur, 50 miles south of Dinājpur town, and passes through the town itself, and the villages of Kāntānagar (12 miles north of Dinājpur), Birganj (17 miles), Thākurgāon (35 miles), Fakirganj, and Ātwāri, close to the last of which it crosses the Nāgar river and enters the Purneā district. It is identical with the old Darjeeling road described by Major Sherwill, and the whole length of it from Godāgāri to Ātwāri was originally constructed in the early days of British rule at the cost of the Dinājpur district. Nowadays the portion south of the town is called the Murshidābād road and that to the north the Darjeeling road. The alignment of the road is excellent and only one river of any size, the Dahalā, has to be crossed till Kāntānagar is reached, where there is a ferry across the Dhepā. Between Thākurgāon and Ātwāri two streams, the Sineā and the Soke, and the Tāngan river, have to be crossed, but all of these are fordable throughout a great portion of the year. The fine tanks of Rāmsāgar and Prānsāgar are on this road, respectively 4 and 12 miles south of Dinājpur. As this is one of the principal

roads in the district great efforts are made to keep it in repair, but owing to heavy cart traffic and scarcity of funds the road surface has been worn away in places till it is below the level of the surrounding paddy fields.

Rangpur Road.

This was the old high road to Rangpur but has now been almost abandoned in favour of the railway which follows very much the same alignment. It is, nevertheless, kept in a reasonable state of repair. The first portion from Dinājpur to Chirirbandar is little used except by foot passengers. From Chirirbandar (9 miles east of Dinājpur) on to Pārbatipur (19 miles) a certain amount of cart traffic passes over it. The road was in process of being metalled when the railway was first opened. The work was then dropped but portions of the old metalling may still be seen between Pārbatipur and Chirirbandar. The road crosses the Kānkrā and the Ātrāi, both of which are fordable in the dry season and provided with ferries in the rains.

Māldā Road.

This runs due west from Dinājpur as far as Birol, a railway station and trading centre (5 miles), where it takes a turn to the south-west, and passing by the beautiful old Mahipāl Dighi tank crosses the Tāngan at Bansihāri, the head-quarters of the thānā of that name. From there it is some 10 miles to the Māldā border, which it crosses 2½ miles south of Daulatpur. From Birol to Bansihāri there is comparatively little cart traffic on the road, and it is consequently fairly good, though narrow in places. From Bansihāri on there is heavy cart traffic with Māldā, large quantities of paddy being exported and potatoes and pulse imported.

Bogrā Road.

This runs south-east from Dinājpur to the railway station of Hilli just across the Bogrā border. The most important villages on its route are Samjhiā and Chintāman, both centres of the rice trade. At the former it crosses the Ātrāi river, where there is a ferry. The road is kept in fair order though the cart traffic on it is heavy.

Purneā Road.

The Purneā road runs in a north-westerly direction from Dinājpur, passes through the lower portion of the Pirganj thānā and the northern portion of the Hemtābād out-post and enters Purneā on the boundary between the Rānisankail and Rāiganj thānās. In Dinājpur district it crosses the Tāngan and Kulik rivers as well as two less important streams, the Koharli and the Nunā. All of these are hereabouts pretty deep and have to be crossed by ferry throughout the greater portion of the year. On the Purneā border the Nāgar has to be negotiated. This, however, though wide and somewhat formidable in appearance is fordable in the dry season. There are few places of any importance on this road. Mālun, where there is a small District Board bungalow, and Bindole, where a large market is held, are perhaps most worthy of mention. Near where it crosses the Purneā border, the road passes within two miles of the large and important village of Haripur.

Kishenganj Road.

This is an important road passing as it does through the important centres of Bochaganj, where there is a charitable

dispensary, a big zamindār's *kachhahri*, and a large market; Pirganj, which is a thānā headquarters and boasts a registration office and a large Middle English school; and Nekmarad, where one of the largest annual cattle fairs in the province is held. This road takes off from the Purneā road about five miles from Dinājpur and runs more to the north, crossing into Purneā in the extreme north of the Rānisankail thānā. As in the case of the Purneā road, the principal rivers which have to be negotiated are the Tāngan, Kulik and Nāgar. None of these are bridged. The road after crossing the Purneā boundary runs direct to Kishenganj, a distance of about 14 miles.

Bālurghāt Road. This road connects Bālurghāt with the district head-quarters and is one of the most important roads in the district. It runs in a more or less south-easterly direction to Kumārganj (16 miles from Dinājpur), the head-quarters of the police out-post of that name, where it crosses the Ātrāi. Between this and Patirām (23 miles), the next important place through which it passes, it takes a turn and runs due south. Patirām was formerly a much more important place than it is now, being the head-quarters of the principal thānā in the southern part of the district. This was removed to Bālurghāt when the Sub-division was formed. It is still, however, an important trading centre, and there is a very heavy cart traffic between it and Hilli, the nearest railway station. There is a District Board bungalow here, and a charitable dispensary has recently been established. From Patirām the road runs along the east bank of the Ātrāi to Bālurghāt (32 miles). From Bālurghāt it runs still due south along the river to Patnitolā (44 miles), a fairly important village and a thānā centre. About four miles south of this it crosses into Rājshāhi.

Bālurghāt-Hilli Road. This is a short road only 16 miles long, running in an easterly direction from Bālurghāt, but is important as being the nearest means of communication with the railway at Hilli, just inside the Bogrā district. It is joined by the road from Patirām at the village of Dāput about five miles west of Hilli. The only river of any importance to be crossed is the Jamunā just before Hilli is reached. This is fordable in the dry season. This road has recently been taken over by the Public Works Department who are in process of making it *pakka* It is the only road in the district maintained by the department.

Gangarāmpur Road. This runs almost parallel with the Murshidābād road, keeping close to the east bank of the Punarbhabā all the way. Eighteen miles south of Dinājpur it passes through the village of Gangārāmpur, a thānā head-quarters, where a new charitable dispensary has recently been opened. Two miles further on is the large village of Nāyā Bāzār on the Tāngan, where many merchants reside and a considerable trade in rice and other produce is carried on. From this place the road runs almost due south, and passing through a small corner of the Māldā district comes round in a curve to the east and joins the Murshidābād road, a couple of

miles above Nischintāpur. This latter part of the road runs through several villages buried in mango groves and is pretty enough, but it is little used and badly kept up.

Nilphāmāri Road.

This runs from Thākurgāon to Nilphāmāri railway station on the Eastern Bengal State Railway, a distance of 26 miles. The first 19 miles are in Dinājpur district and the last 7 in the Nilphāmāri Sub-division of Rangpur. The direction of the road is almost due east to Gareyā (8 miles), after which it takes a south-easterly direction passing through Jhārbāri (16 miles) and Joyganj (18 miles). The two first of these are important collecting centres for jute. Joyganj is noteworthy as containing a *kachhahri* of the zamindārs of Teotā in Dāccā district and a *dharmagolā*, or grain bank, managed and supported by the cultivators of the vicinity. There is heavy cart traffic on this road which carries the trade, principally consisting of jute, of the whole of the north-eastern portion of the district. With the exception of the Ātrāi, which is fordable in the dry season and crossed by ferry in the rains, there is no stream of any importance to be crossed between Thākurgāon and Nilphāmāri. The road is well provided with bridges and kept in fairly good repair.

Other roads.

The above are the principal roads in the district, in the maintenance of which most of the available District Board funds are spent. There are others of less importance, such as the road from Rānisankail to Churāman and on to Māldā *viâ* Bindole, Rāiganj, and Durgāpur, that from Birol to Kāliyāganj and on to Churāman *viâ* Durgāpur, that from Nawābganj to Ghorāghāt *viâ* Bhāduriā, that from Patnitolā to Nithpur *viâ* Moheshpur and Ghātnagar, and various minor connecting roads, but less attention is paid to these, and a detailed description of them is hardly necessary.

RAILWAYS.

The main line of the Eastern Bengal State Railway traverses the eastern angle of the district from north to south for a distance of 31 miles. The Behār section of the same railway leaves the main line at Pārbatipur junction and runs from east to west across the centre of the district passing through the head-quarters town. The former was opened on different dates between 1884 and 1887 and the latter between 1887 and 1891. This railway was originally called the Northern Bengal State Railway. The stations on the main line from north to south are Pārbatipur, Bhawānipur, Phulbāri and Chorkāi (identical with Berāmpur) and those on the Behār section from east to west are Pārbatipur, Chirirbandar, Kaugāon, Dinājpur, Birol, Rādhikāpur, Kāliyāganj, Bangālbāri, and Rāiganj.

WATER COMMUNICATION.

Something has already been said about the water communications in the district. At one time, in the almost entire absence of roads, the bulk of the commerce of the country was carried by means of the rivers and *khāls* during the rainy season and even to-day there is a considerable export of grain by the Ātrāi, Jamunā, Punarbhabā, Tāngan, Kulik and Mahānanda. It is universally admitted, however, that the rivers in general, but especially the

Ātrāi have in recent times deteriorated greatly as a means of communication. This is due to the fact that for some obscure reason they are silting up and are now only navigable for country boats of any size during the height of the rainy season and even then for a comparatively short distance up stream. This silting up process has been especially rapid in the case of the Ātrāi since the earthquake of 1897, and there is reason to suppose that the level of a portion of its bed must have been raised then. Indeed several petitions have been submitted to Government for dredging this river, but have been rejected on the score of expense.

Canals.

There are only two navigable canals in the district. Of these the Mālijal is a canal some 6 or 7 miles long connecting the Ātrāi and the Dhepā a little above Birganj. It is said to have been originally constructed by a Muhammadan chief, Sādat Āli, and to have carried a considerable volume of water, till in 1786-87 the Tistā, which originally flowed down the channels of the Karatoyā and Ātrāi, changed its course and made its way in a more easterly direction into the Brahmaputra. Since that time there has been comparatively little water in this canal, though without its help the Dhepā would be a much smaller river than it is. The other navigable canal is a short one, only 2 or 3 miles in length, connecting the Punarbhabā with its branch the Brahmani, a few miles below Gangārāmpur. This carries as much water almost as the main stream of the Punarbhabā. It is not known by whom it was originally constructed. Another canal worthy of mention is the Rāmdānrā of Rājā Rāmnāth constructed to connect his country-seat, of Govindnagar and Prānnagar, so that the transport of the family idols from one place to the other might be facilitated. This is now no longer navigable, except perhaps for small boats in the height of the rains, but the high embankment which marks its southern bank is still intact and is a noticeable feature in the landscape. The present road from Birganj to Thākurgāon follows the southern bank of this canal for many miles. In and near the town of Dinājpur are several canals dug at one time or another for drainage purposes. The principal of these is the Ghāgrā formed by Rājā Rāmnāth to connect the Gāburā, a small branch of the Atrāi, and the Kachāi stream. The united streams of the Ghāgrā and Kachāi after their junction on the east of the town were called the Ghāgrā and flowed into the Punarbhabā at a point south-west of the present *māidān*. In 1878 this outlet into the Punarbhabā was blocked up, and a fresh channel was cut for the Ghāgrā which finally joined the Punarbhabā at Ghughudāngā six miles south of the town. The object was to prevent the water of the Ghāgrā being held up by the river when the latter was in flood and flowing into the town. This so-called canal is little better than a drain or ditch and is not navigable.

Boats.

The inhabitants of Dinājpur have little natural aptitude for boating, and amongst them the instinctive watermanship, which seems to be born in the people of the districts further east, is

unknown. As might be expected, their boats are somewhat clumsy and primitive. To begin with we have the *dongā* or small dugout, a cranky little craft chiefly used by fishermen. Next in size to this comes the *sarangā* or full sized dugout, the boat in most general use for all purposes. This is sometimes enlarged by side planks and roofed with bamboo matting (*chhai* or *chappar*) and is used for carrying passengers and cargo. These dugouts are made of *simul* and *tārul* trees and are the only boats made in the district, all other boats being imported from Jalpāiguri. A somewhat larger boat generally used for fishing is the *dinghi*, also known as *nāotakhtā*, as being made with nine planks on each side. The boat most generally used for carrying passengers and cargo is the *koshā*. It is a plank built boat long and narrow in shape and has a certain grace and symmetry of its own. It is made in various sizes. The smaller sizes are constructed to carry between 20 and 50 maunds of cargo while the larger sizes, generally called *pātkoshā*, carry up to 200 maunds. Besides the above, larger boats of varying patterns and tonnage may be met with on the lower reaches of some of the rivers in the rainy season. These are of foreign construction and are known amongst the people of the district by the general term *bara naukā* (large boat).

POSTAL COMMUNICATIONS.

Daily postal communication with Calcutta was established in the very early days of British rule by means of the Murshidābād or Darjeeling road passing through the town of Murshidābād. In 1861-62, the earliest year for which statistics are available, we learn that the number of letters, parcels, books, etc., carried by the post office was 63,028. In 1870-71 this number had increased to 157,701. In 1862 a tax called the Zamindāri Dāk Cess was introduced. This was for the maintenance of dāk runners for the conveyance of papers, letters, packets, etc., between the head-quarters of thānās and the District and Sub-divisional offices. This continued to be levied from the zamindārs till 1906 when it was finally abolished and the work taken over by the postal department. The district now contains 54 post offices and 340 miles of postal communication; the number of postal articles delivered in 1909-10 was 1,683,448. The number of telegraph offices unconnected with the railway is four, *viz.*, those at Dinājpur, Rājganj (a quarter of the town), Pārbatipur, and Rāiganj. The opening of two new telegraph offices at Thākurgāon and Bālurghāt has recently been sanctioned, but the lines have not yet been laid. The number of savings bank deposits in 1909-10 was 4,895 and the amount deposited was Rs. 6,33,000. The value of the money-orders issued in the same year was Rs. 20,81,000 and of those paid Rs. 6,79,000.

CHAPTER X.

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION.

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION IN MUHAMMADAN TIMES.

We know nothing of the system of revenue administration prior to and little of that prevailing during Muhammadan times. We learn from the Āin-i-Akbāri that in the time of Akbār, about A.D. 1600, his Finance Minister Todarmal made a *khās* or *raiyatwāri* settlement, and divided the Empire into 15 revenue divisions called Subhās. The Subhā of Bengal was divided into 24 Sarkārs, parts of 6 of which fell within the limits of Dinājpur. The Sarkārs were again sub-divided into mahāls, which corresponded to some extent with the present parganās. The mauzās into which the present parganās are divided are said to be village divisions dating from pre-Muhammadan times and which were not affected by Akbār's divisions. The system of revenue collection in force amongst the Muhammadan conquerors of Bengal appears to have been to appoint farmers of the revenue for larger or smaller areas, as might be convenient. These persons were made responsible for the payment of a fixed sum and were allowed to collect it, and as much more as they could squeeze out of the people, in any way they liked. Revenue administration was, however, very lax and little attempt was made to insist on the punctual payment of the land tax, which no doubt frequently fell into arrears. The Muhammadans appear in ordinary times to have been content with a very moderate revenue, though there is evidence to show that when they were in need of money for purposes of waging war or for any other urgent cause, they did not hesitate to increase the demand out of all proportion to the ability of the people to meet it. The farmers of the revenue appointed by the Āfghān rulers of Gaur and, after them, by the Mughals were in many instances the hereditary landowners, who remained in undisturbed possession of their estates and free in a great measure from interference, on condition of paying a reasonable tribute. This appears to have been the case in Dinājpur, the greater portion of which was settled with the successive princes of the Dinājpur Rāj family, who were allowed the privilege of administering their own estates. They appear to have ordinarily been treated with much consideration by the Mughals, indeed it was under their rule that the Dinājpur family reached the zenith of its power and glory during the reigns of Rājās Prānnāth and Rāmnāth. In 1722, payments of revenue having become very irregular, Mir Jāfir, Subāhdār of Bengal, made a new settlement dividing the province of Bengal into Chaklās, to each of which a Chaklādār was appointed as collector of the revenue. Rājā Prān-

nāth obtained the appointment of Chaklādār for the greater part of Chaklās Akbārnagar and Ghorāghāt, within which Dinājpur fell. We do not know what revenue Prānnāth paid, but in the time of Rājā Rāmnāth, his successor, it seems that this was fixed at the very reasonable sum of 12½ lakhs of rupees. Rāmnāth succeeded in retaining the favour of the Muhammadan governors, and the assessment remained unchanged till his death in 1760. He was succeeded by his son Baidyanāth, and in 1762 the assessment was raised to 26½ lakhs. The reason for this enormous increase in the demand is unknown but it soon became clear that it was beyond the power of the Rājā to pay it in full, and a considerable portion of it remained unrealized.

EARLY BRITISH ADMINISTRATION.

In 1765 the Diwani or right of civil and revenue administration of Bengal, Behār, and Orissa, was granted by the Mughal Emperor to the East India Company and from that year Dinājpur passed under British rule. The existing assessment, being reckoned excessive, was reduced to 18 lakhs. In 1772 the direct revenue control was assumed by the Company, and an English Collector, or Chief of the Revenue, of the zamindāri of Dinājpur was appointed, who made a new settlement with Rājā Baidyanāth. This settlement was effected in a more systematic manner than previous ones had been, each parganā being separately assessed, unless the revenue assessed on it amounted to more than a lakh of rupees, in which case it was divided. The assessment, however, remained much the same as before and it was not till 1774 that a further reduction to Rs. 14,60,444 was made. With the exception of the years 1781 and 1782, during which Rājā Devi Singh held a farm of the estate at an increased revenue, the assessment remained unchanged till the time of the Permanent Settlement. A native Diwan was associated with the first Collector, whose work was also superintended by the Revenue Council at Murshidābād. In 1773 the European Collector was withdrawn and an *Āmil* or native collector appointed, while one of the six Provincial Councils, newly constituted to supervise revenue administration, took up its seat at Dinājpur. In 1780 Rājā Baidyanāth died without leaving a male heir, and his widow, Rāni Saraswati, adopted a boy of three years, named Rādhānāth, who was recognised as Baidyanāth's successor by Warren Hastings, on payment of a succession fee of 730 gold mohurs. For the first two years after the death of Baidyanāth the revenues of the estate were farmed by Rājā Devi Singh of Dilwārpur in Murshidābād, who had also taken a farm of the Rangpur estates. This man seems to have been a clever but unscrupulous adventurer who gained the favour of the British by his adaptability and knowledge of English. The title of Rājā must have been conferred on him by the Company as he does not appear to have been a zamindār or even a capitalist. He paid a revenue of Rs. 16,60,444 for the Dinājpur Rāj estates, but his management was so dishonest and oppressive that he and several of his *amlās* were degraded and

kept in confinement till 1791, when sentence was finally passed directing some refunds, the cancelment of some fraudulent purchases made by him, and his perpetual banishment from the districts he had mismanaged. His place was taken by Jānaki Rām Singh, a brother of the Rāni Saraswati, who agreed to pay revenue at the former rate of Rs. 14,60,444. In 1781 the Provincial Committees were abolished and a Metropolitan Committee of Revenue appointed. In 1786 the Metropolitan Committee became the Board of Revenue and the post of European Collector of Revenue was recreated. Mr. G. Hatch was the first to be appointed managing collector of the Dinājpur Rāj under the new system. Meanwhile Jānaki Rām Singh, though he collected the rents of the estate regularly enough from the cultivators, does not appear to have grasped the necessity for making regular payments to the Collector and had fallen into arrear with his revenue. In November 1786, by the Board's orders, he was given three days to make good his balance. As he failed to do so, he was removed to Calcutta, where he died about 1790. In June 1787 Rām Kānta Ray, an uncle of the minor Rādhānāth, was installed as manager of the Dinājpur Rāj, the assessment remaining unchanged. In a letter dated 15th January 1788 to the Board of Revenue Mr. Hatch, the Collector, explained that this assessment was indeed low, but that owing to mismanagement on the part of the native officials of the zamindār in the past, the estate could not afford a higher one at the time. He held out hopes that with more careful management the assessment might subsequently be raised. How Mr. Hatch endeavoured to improve the management of the estate is thus described by Mr. E. V. Westmacott in an article contributed to the *Calcutta Review* on the subject of the Dinājpur Rāj :—"In June 1787 Ram Kanto Roy was installed as manager of the Dinagepoor estates, his cutcherry being a Government office and the Collector's servants attending daily to check the collections. Every detail of the management was supervised by Mr. Hatch, the estate being divided into sixty-four zillas each under a tahsildar, who collected from Rs. 6,000 to Rs. 1,00,000, receiving a percentage, while each ryot's lands were measured, and he paid rent according to the quantity and quality of his land, irrespective of the crop grown. The revenues of the estate were well managed, but it was long before the mischievous practices of Jānaki Ram ceased to bear fruit. He had raised large sums of ready money by subletting lands at a low rent, and the annual income of the zamindar suffered accordingly until the Collector had resettled all the tenures. In spite, however, of the good management, I believe that at this time the Raja's income was injured by the abolition of numerous illegal cesses, which had been collected by his predecessors, but which could not be brought under the denomination of the *sayer*, for the abolition of which compensation was given, and which nevertheless is collected to this day by the

proprietors in the district, though Government no longer receives ten-elevenths of it. The cesses referred to are transit duties on salt and other goods, the right of seizing the property of intestate persons, and taxes on bird-catchers, tom-tom beaters, and dealers in intoxicating drugs and the like." The revenue of some other estates in the district which did not form part of the Dinājpur Rāj was fixed by Mr. Hatch at Rs. 1,52,445. Thus the total revenue of the entire district came to Rs. 16,12,889 siccā rupees The value of a siccā rupee exceeded that of a Company's rupee by a little more than one anna. Meanwhile the rules for a decennial settlement, which was in contemplation, were being elaborated by the Board of Revenue. It seems that the intention of the Company's officers, in fixing the revenue payable by the zamindārs, was also to fix the rent payable by the cultivators, who were to receive *pattās* from their respective landlords stating the amount of rent payable. Some time in 1791 the decennial settlement was introduced, and in 1793 this was made permanent by a proclamation issued by the Governor-General, Lord Cornwallis, on 22nd March of that year. From a letter to the Board of Revenue written by Mr. Hatch on 28th February 1793 it appears that *pattās* had been issued to the *raiyats* throughout the district. The object of insisting on the issue of *pattās* clearly was that, whereas the Company undertook not to raise the revenue demanded from the zamindārs above the sum fixed as payable by them at the settlement, the latter on their part were bound not to raise the rents of their *raiyats* above the amount fixed in the *pattās* and to content themselves with the reasonable profits allowed them by the officers by whom the assessment was made. This object has long since been lost sight of and the issue of *pattās* to *raiyats* discontinued. In the same letter the Collector stated that the revenue of the district was 16,12,576 siccā or 17,20,081 Company's rupees. There is no doubt that at the present day the assessment of Dinājpur is high as compared with other neighbouring districts, being over 50 per cent. of the gross rental. This is accounted for by the fact that, at the time the settlement was made, almost the entire district was under the *khās* management of the Collector, who was consequently in a better position to make a proper valuation of the assets of the estates under his charge than were other Collectors, who had to depend for information almost entirely on the reports, often biassed and unreliable, of their native assistants. The history of the ruin of the Dinājpur Rāj, which forms an integral part of an account of the revenue administration of the period, may here be given at length in the words of Mr. Westmacott: "In January 1792, Raja Radhanath commenced his sixteenth year and was placed in charge of his estates; Ram Kanta Ray submitted his accounts as manager, and the Board of Revenue expressed themselves highly pleased with his conduct. The decennial settlement had been concluded two years before, and the Raja was to pay a yearly revenue of Rs. 14,44,107 for the first two

years and then Rs. 14,84,107. This will give some idea of the extent of his estates, as the total land revenue of the present collectorate of Dinagepoor is now under Rs. 18,00,000. For a year and more all went smoothly; but when, in March 1793, Mr. Hatch was promoted to a seat on the Board of Revenue, his successor, Mr. John Eliot, soon found reason to be dissatisfied with the management of affairs at the Rajbaree. The Rani had surrounded the Raja with the old servants of Janokee Ram, the two Mojoomdars and others; and in spite of positive orders from the Board they were turning out the tahsildars of Mr. Hatch's appointment, and the Raja was receiving sums of money to appoint improper persons in their room. Mr. Eliot found satisfaction in believing that the Raja listened attentively to his advice, but the objectionable changes continued, and he saw no hope of amendment except in the banishment of the Mojoomdars and their company, and sending the Rani back to Gobindanogor. The Raja admitted signing blank papers and giving them to the *amlas* to make what use they pleased of them. In April 1794, the Governor-General decided that Raja Radhanath should be deprived of the management of his estates; his seal was locked up in the Collector's treasury, and Ram Kanta Ray was again installed as manager. Mr. Eliot used to make the young Raja come and read to him twice a week and write him a letter daily, and flattered himself that he was fitting him for the duties of his position. In October 1795 Mr. Eliot became Judge of Tippera, and Mr. Morgan, Assistant Collector, was in charge of the office until June 1796 when Mr. Cornelius Bird arrived as Collector. When Raja Radhanath was for the second time placed in charge of his property is not quite clear, but it was before January 1797, when he already owed Rs. 69,677 on account of revenue, and the decree went forth from the Board to sell some of his lands. The unfortunate young man was then only 20 years of age, but neither Mr. Bird nor the Board appear to have hesitated as to the propriety of breaking up the great Dinagepoor estate. The first sale was cancelled for informality, but in February 1798, in spite of the Collector's certifying that owing to drought the ryots had not been able to pay their rents, further sales were ordered, and yet, at the end of the Bengali year, April 1798, more than half a lakh of revenue remained unpaid, month after month instalments became due, and lot after lot was sold. The Raja was raising money on mortgage, Ram Kanto Roy being one of his principal creditors, and he saved some part of his estate by purchasing the lots in false names; while his wife Ranī Tripoora Soondari bought lands paying a revenue of near Rs. 50,000, and old Rāni Soroswotee bought others paying Rs. 21,517; but little was saved out of the wreck of so great an argosy, for by the end of 1800 everything had been sold and the Raja was a prisoner, unable to leave the Rajbaree because his private creditors were endeavouring to seize his person and

throw him into the common jail. On the 26th January 1801, having just completed his twenty-fourth year, he died. Mr. Bird, who had been the instrument of his ruin, had died on the 3rd June, and Mr. Courtney Smith was now the Collector. Whatever may have been the merits of the policy which broke up this large estate, there can be no question but that it was carried out with extreme harshness. The rule was sternly adhered to of selling to the highest bidder; Dinagepoor is a long way from Calcutta, Moorshidabad, Patna, or Dacca, and bears an evil reputation of unhealthiness, and no one from a distance cared to enquire whether the purchase of land in the district would be a good investment. The competition was left entirely to the servants of the estate, to the *amla* of Government, and to those other zemindars who had not been ruined by the Decennial Settlement, and the consequence was that the lots into which the property had been divided sold for much less than their value, some of them not bringing so much as the annual revenue assessed upon them, which an experience of a dozen years had shown them well able to pay. The only purchasers who were on the spot were unable to bid higher. In one way the Raja gained from this some slight benefit, for a few lots were bought up by the ladies of his family, his wife selling her jewels, and Rani Soroswatee having as much as Janokee Ram's embezzlements had left her of her monthly pension of fifteen hundred rupees. Unless it was resolved that the Raja of Dinagepoor was too powerful for a subject, and therefore that as soon as a pretext offered his estates were to be broken up, which nowhere appears to have been the feeling of Government, it is difficult to see why a fair upset price should not have been fixed on each lot, and if no one bid up to that price, the lot sequestered and put under the management of Government officers. The indirect profits of the zemindars are so much greater than the legitimate ones, which under Government management are all that are carried to credit, that possession of the estate is worth having and the dispossession indicated would as effectually secure the punctual payment of Government revenue, as the absolute alienation of the estates. The swarm of *lotdārs*, many of them absentees, who took the place of the ancient gentry have not done much for the country." Buchanan Hamilton speaks of these *lotdārs*, who in his day constituted the majority of the proprietors of the district, as being despised as newcomers and upstarts by the people, though, in point of fact, their estates were better managed than the estates of the hereditary zamindārs, and the *raiyats* on them better off than those of the latter. The contempt in which the new landlords were originally held may account for many of them living elsewhere, though indeed nowadays a fair proportion of them reside on their estates. When the Dinājpur Rāj was split up, each of the lots sold was formed into a separate estate with a revenue fixed in perpetuity, and a number was assigned to each in the Tauzi Roll of the district. Up to 1829 the

Dinājpur collectorate remained under the direct control of the Board of Revenue. In that year the Rājshāhi Commissionership with its head-quarters at Rāmpur Bauleāh was created and the district came in revenue matters under the authority of the new Commissioner. In 1837 it was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Revenue of the Bhagalpur Division under whom it remained till 1854, when it was again transferred to Rājshāhi. Since then there has been no change in revenue jurisdiction

SURVEYS AND SETTLEMENTS.

Since the year 1793 there has been no general settlement of the district, though cadastral surveys and settlements of rents for various small estates have been made from time to time under the provisions of the Bengal Tenancy Act, at the request of the proprietors concerned.

Revenue Survey of 1857—61.

Between the years 1857 and 1861 a professional survey was made of the whole district. The object of this survey, as set forth in the Manual of Surveying for India published in 1851, was "the definement of each estate on the Collector's rent roll, and to determine the relation of land to revenue by the ascertainment of the areas and boundaries of estates and mahals." It was carried out in 18 main circuits and maps of each of these were prepared, which are still preserved in good condition in the collectorate record-room. The professional survey was preceded by what is called the *thākbast* survey, which was not really a separate survey but a preliminary demarcation of boundaries to facilitate the professional operations which followed. This preliminary demarcation work was carried out by an uncovenanted Deputy Collector with a staff of *peshkārs* and *āmins*, working under the supervision of a covenanted civil officer with the full powers of a Collector. The work was done parganā by parganā, and the boundaries of every village to be included in the professional survey operations were ascertained by detailed measurements and demarcated by mud pillars (*thāk*) or other marks. Disputes about boundaries were settled on the spot, and an acknowledgment (*supurudnāmā*) obtained from the several parties concerned as to the accuracy of the boundary laid down. A note was prepared for each village explaining any peculiarities connected with it, the nature and names of the included *mahāls* or estates, whether there were any other lands belonging to the village in other parts of the the parganā, whether the village contained within its boundaries lands belonging to other villages, and concluding with remarks as to the condition of the village, the proportion of cultivation to waste, and other matters of interest. When a parganā was completed a correct list of villages was made out, together with a general rough sketch or *mujmili* map, showing each village in its proper relative position. All these documents were then forwarded for the use and guidance of the professional surveyor, who was interdicted from surveying any boundary without them. No field to field measurement was made by the *thākbast* survey party except in the case of plots of land belonging to other villages

enclosed by the boundaries of the village under survey. Such plots are called *chhits* and marked on the *thāk* maps. The records prepared by these two surveys have proved invaluable for the purposes of land revenue administration, and the geographical and statistical report of the district, written by Major Sherwill, the Revenue Surveyor, gives a great deal of useful information about its condition at that time. I qucte here an extract from this report which seems to have some bearing on land revenue administration: "The assessment in Dinagepore is considered high, but all pergunnahs are not equally assessed; that of Pergunnah Gillahbaira is notoriously high. Many estates are rack-rented and yield no profit, but being owned by men of small capital engaged in trade are retained by them in consideration of the position obtained in society by being land-holders. The northern pergunnahs are less heavily taxed. Zamindars often oppress tenants by demanding exhorbitant rents and making other petty and vexatious demands; but the most liberal are the greatest gainers in the end, as the oppressed ryats, having got into debt and being unable to meet their obligations, run away and settle down on neighbouring estates on more liberal terms. Land varies in value in different parts of the district. The following are the approximate rates per beegah of 87 hauts, which obtain in different localities:—

Reclaimed land ...	... 4 annas.
Jungle, 1 to 3 years free, after that	... 8 to 12 annas.
Ordinary Paddy land ...	... 12 annas.
Boro Rice land ..	.. 6 to 12 annas.
Best Rice land ...	... 1 Rupee to 1-8-0.

Defalcations in rent are not numerous, consequently the sales of estates, in default of payment of revenue, are few. During 1860 there were four sales, and the average of the three preceding years was $5\frac{3}{4}$. The Sudder Jummah or imperial Revenue of the District, exclusive of that portion transferred to Bograh in 1851, is Rs. 19,03,467-4-6, and was obtained as follows, in the financial year 1859-60:—

	Rs.	a.	p.
Land Revenue	17,71,976	3	6
Akbarree	48,555	4	0
Stamps	82,703	13	0
Fisheries (1860-61)	232	0	0
Total ...	19,03,467	4	6

When we consider that the whole of this large country is kept in order by a few Thannah Police, there not being a single soldier of any kind in the entire districts, we must allow it is a very important and one of the best paying in all Bengal. The collection of revenue is made by a Collector, and the duties of the Collectorate are less heavy in this than in other Districts paying a less Jummah, which may be attributed to the perpetual settlement."

All landed property in Dinājpur is included in one or other of the following classes of estates:— **ESTATES.**

(1) Revenue-paying estates.
(2) Revenue-free estates.
(3) Resumed estates.

The number of revenue-paying estates is 764, with a total area of 2,613,502 acres. All are permanently settled. They include also revenue-free estates, which were resumed by Government under the Resumption Law, Regulation II of 1819, and the title deeds by which the holders claimed to hold their lands revenue-free having been found to be invalid, were assessed to revenue and settled permanently with their former proprietors. **Revenue-paying estates.**

The number of revenue-free estates is 178 with an area of 33,904 acres. These are principally of the following kinds—(1) Brahmattar, for the maintenance of Brahmins; (2) Debattar, for the worship of the gods; (3) Pirpāl, for the maintenance of mosques sacred to the memory of Muhammadan *pirs* or saints—and were granted before the British accession to the Diwāni, either by the emperors of Delhi or the Dinājpur Rājās. All were attached under the Resumption Law of 1819, but were subsequently released and recognised by Government as revenue-free on the holders proving their titles to the satisfaction of the revenue authorities. These must not be confused with the rent-free tenures to be described further on, which are rent, but not revenue, free, the Government revenue being charged on the estates to which they originally belonged. In the case of many of the revenue-free estates and rent-free tenures alike the original object with which the lands were granted has been lost sight of altogether, and the lands have come to be regarded as the absolute property of their possessors, who may alienate them at will. **Revenue-free estates.**

The resumed estates were estates held revenue-free prior to 1819, which were resumed by Government, and the proprietors of which did not appear to prove their title or take settlement. Under the law as it stands at present, such lands can neither be sold nor permanently settled with other persons than the original proprietors. They are therefore either managed directly by the Collector, or leased for various periods. There is now only one such estate in this district, with an area of 50 acres. **Resumed estates.**

Owing to the trouble and expense involved in realising rents, the loss suffered owing to cultivators deserting their holdings, the large area over which the lands included in an estate are sometimes scattered and other causes, it frequently happens that a zamindār keeps only a small portion of his estate in his own management, and lets out the rest either in parcels on lease or in farm. Sometimes the whole estate is so let out. Hence the creation of subordinate tenures of various kinds which are described by Hunter in his Statistical Account of Dinājpur as follows:— **TENURES.**

"(1) Istimrari or Mukarrari taluks.—These tenures are those which were created by the Zamindars or others having a proprie- **Istimrāri Taluks.**

tary right in the soil, before the Permanent Settlement of Lord Cornwallis in 1793. They were granted to the lessees, their heirs and successors, in perpetuity, at a fixed rate of rent. The holders of these tenures can transfer or sublet their taluks in patni, ijara or otherwise. The tenures are liable to sale only for arrears of rent, and by a decree of the Civil Court, under the provisions of Act VIII of 1869. In the case of the sale of the parent estate under Act XI of 1859, for arrears of Government revenue, the holders of istimrari taluks are protected from ejectment or enhancement of rent on the part of the auction purchaser.

Patni taluks. (2) This tenure had its origin on the estates of the Maharaja of Burdwan, but has since become common throughout Bengal. It is a tenure created by the zamindar to be held by the lessee and his heirs for ever, at a rent fixed in perpetuity. A *salāmi* or present, equal in value to from 3 to 5 times the annual rent, is paid by the lessee to the zamindar on the creation of the grant. The grant once made, the zamindar is divested of connection with the property, the patnidar acquiring every right of proprietorship which the zamindar possessed. On failure to pay the rent, however, the zamindar has power to sell the tenure under the provisions of Regulation VIII of 1819. A patnidar has the power of subletting his tenure, the sub-tenant acquiring the same rights as the patnidar himself possesses from the zamindar. A patni when sublet becomes a darpatni; a darpatni when sublet becomes a sepatni. Arrears of rent from these sub-tenures are recoverable under Act VIII of 1869.

Ijaras. (3) An ijaras is a temporary lease or farm. The ijaradar has no permanent interest in the estate, and his sole object is to make as much as possible out of the cultivators during the term of the lease. He is, however, debarred from ousting the tenants, or from enhancing their rents. In some cases a zamindar makes over his estate in ijara to a person to whom he owes money, in order to liquidate the debt These latter are called dai-sud-ijaras...... ...Ijaras are generally granted for a term of 4 or 5 years, sometimes for 8 or 10 years, but very seldom for a longer period than 20 years. A zamindar cannot oust an ijaradar, except by a decree of the civil court for arrears of rent under Act VIII of 1869 In the event of the sale of the estate for arrears of Government revenue, the purchaser can oust the ijaradar, except in the case of an ijara granted for a term of 20 years or upwards and duly registered under the provisions of Act XI of 1859. An ijara is sometimes sublet, and becomes a dar-ijara, the term, of course, being limited by that of the ijara itself. The dar-ijaradar enjoys all the rights and privileges of the ijaradar." The term *tāluk* is not nowadays used in connection with *istimrāri* tenures which are called simply *istimrārs*. *Ijārās* are generally spoken of as *ijārā mahāls*. The number of *patni tāluks* registered under Act XI of 1859 in the district is 16?, with an area of 448,686 acres. There are also a few unregistered *patni tāluks*, the

number of which is not known. The number of *istimrdrs* and *ijārā mahāls* is not known, but the latter only occur on some of the larger estates such as that of the Mahārājā Bahādur. There are few *dar-patnis* and still fewer *se-patnis* in existence.

Next come the cultivating tenures or *jotes*, which are thus described by Hunter :—" (1) Maurusi jots are holdings created by a zamindar, to be held by cultivators in perpetuity at a fixed rate of rent. These tenures are transferable, and the purchaser acquires all the rights and privileges of the original holder. (2) Istimrari jots are cultivators' holdings, the rents of which have not been altered for a period of 20 years, and the owners of which have thus acquired the right of holding them free from liability to enhancement. These tenures, like the foregoing, are saleable by the holders. (3) Jots of cultivators with occupancy rights are holdings of at least 12 years' standing. The owners of these jots cannot be ejected, but the rent can be enhanced by a suit in the civil court. (4) Jots of tenants-at-will are the holdings of cultivators who do not possess a right of occupancy and are liable to ejectment and the payment of enhanced rents. (5) Nij-jots are the home-farms of the zamindars." He also describes some other kinds of holdings, which are now no longer in existence.

Cultivating tenures or jotes.

Lākhirāj or rent-free tenures are of several kinds, *viz.*, *Brahmattar*, *Debattar* and *Pirpāl*. The meaning of these terms has already been described in connection with revenue-free estates. The distinction between them and these latter is that whereas revenue-free estates pay no revenue to Government, the revenue payable on rent-free tenures is charged to the parent estates of which they originally formed a part. *Chākrāni* lands are holdings granted in return for services rendered to the zamindār, and are liable to be resumed by him when the services of the holders are no longer required. Rent-free tenures and holdings generally are exempt from all payments to the zamindār. Except in the case of *Chākrāni* lands, most of the present holders are purchasers from the original grantees or their descendants.

Rent-free tenures and holdings.

The holders of cultivating tenures are known as *raiyats* or in local parlance *jotedārs*. There is often little to distinguish them from under-tenure-holders cultivating their own lands, except that the latter have the privilege, which ordinary *jotedārs* do not possess, of subletting their lands to tenants at fixed rates.

Besides the above there are two classes of cultivators who occupy land under the holders of cultivating *jotes*. These are *chukanidārs* or under-*raiyats*, who are allowed to occupy a piece of land for a specified term, generally one or two years, on payment of a stated sum as rent, the sum being fixed without reference to the quantity of land occupied, and *ādhiārs*, persons who cultivate a *raiyat's* land, and in return for their labour, and for supplying the necessary plough bullocks and agricultural implements, receive a half share of the produce. Neither of the above classes

have any rights in the land they cultivate. The land occupied by a *chukānidār* is called *thikā* land. A large number of the smaller holders of cultivating *jotes* in the district stand also in the position of *chukānidārs* or *ādhiārs* to other *jotedārs*.

Landlords and tenants.

At the time when the Permanent Settlement was made there were, besides the Rājā of Dinājpur, few zamindārs of any importance in the district. With the splitting up of the Rājā's estates a swarm of smaller zamindāris came into existence. The proprietors of these were the Rājā's *amlās*, merchants, traders, and a few subordinate officers of Government, who had purchased parcels of the Rājā's estates at the auction sales. They were popularly known as *lotdārs* and were looked upon with some aversion and contempt by the people, who had been accustomed to regard the office of zamindār as hereditary. Some of them, knowing little or nothing of the rights and duties attendant on their new position, were content to reside in the towns, leaving their estates to be managed by agents. This arrangement generally worked out very well for the agent but badly for the cultivators and the proprietor. Others, possessing a good knowledge and training in business methods, directed them to the management of their new estates and found, perhaps to their surprise, that the profession of an owner of land, if sufficient attention were devoted to it, was a very paying one, and that it was quite unnecessary to rack-rent or otherwise oppress their tenants to make a handsome profit for themselves. When the assessment which accompanied the Permanent Settlement was made by the Company's officers, the zamindārs generally were regarded by Government as farmers of the Company's lands, and as such only entitled to one-eleventh of the net proceeds of the estates after deducting the cost of collecting rents. If this principle had been strictly adhered to it would have been rather hard on the hereditary landowners, who could justly claim to be regarded as proprietors rather than farmers. In the case of the new men, who had got their lands cheap, the hardship would not have been so great, or at all events, they would have known, when they bought the lands, what they had to expect. In point of fact, however, the portion of the net rental actually retained by the zamindārs varied between 10 and 30 per cent., and there is little doubt that they received rent in kind, in services, or even in cash from the holders of many lands which never appeared on their official rent-rolls. Add to this the countless *ābwābs* or extra-legal cesses, which formed a substantial addition to a landlord's income, and which, sanctioned as they were by ancient custom, the *raiyats* rarely refused to pay, and we must conclude that the assessment was, on the whole, a moderate one. The inference, therefore, is that if the condition of the landlord class in those days was otherwise than good, it was largely their own fault. Their condition to-day is, or ought to be, still better, as, though they have not profited as much as the actual cultivators by

the rise in value of agricultural produce, they have nevertheless benefited by the extension of cultivation and increased demand for land, and their rent-roll to-day is larger than it was 100 years ago, while the Government revenue has remained stationary. On the other hand, the idea prevailing at the time of the Permanent Settlement that the zamindār was only a farmer of the state lands has been lost sight of, and the present zamindārs regard themselves and are regarded as the proprietors of the estates for which they pay revenue, while the assessment is considered decidedly high.

Now, as formerly, an enquiry into the material condition of the landed gentry would reveal the fact that many of them are seriously involved in debt. This, to the casual observer, is hard to understand as the experience gained from the management by Government of private estates, the proprietors of which are minors or disqualified proprietors, shows that with careful management an encumbered estate can, in a few years, be cleared of debt and a handsome balance accumulated, notwithstanding that under Government management the realisation of the extra-legal cesses previously referred to as forming a material part of a zamindār's income, is strictly forbidden. The explanation of this unsatisfactory state of things is that the landlords as a class do not take sufficient interest in the management of their own estates. They are apt to leave things too much in the hands of their *naibs* and *tahsildārs*, who in their turn have a fondness for sitting in their *kachhahris* and leaving the actual work of collecting revenue, enquiring into complaints, and the like, to the *patwāris* and *mandals*. The interest in the land which often makes the English country gentleman as good a man of business, in his own way, as the merchant or manufacturer, is generally regrettably absent. There are, of course, notable exceptions to this rule amongst the landed gentry themselves, while some of the estate managers are both just and conscientious in the discharge of their duties. It is, I suppose, a necessary result of the system which makes the rates of rent payable by tenants to their landlords a more or less fixed quantity, that the latter take little interest in the introduction of agricultural improvements. If a landlord exerts himself to introduce the cultivation of a more remunerative crop amongst his *raiyats*, he must do it from altruistic motives, as he personally is not likely to gain thereby, except perhaps in the matter of more punctual payments of rent due to increased prosperity. I can only discover two instances in which proprietors of land have made serious attempts to introduce new crops to the notice of their tenants. One of these was the introduction of the West Indian varieties of sugarcane by Mr. Payter about 1840, and the other the attempt made in 1884 by Rājā Syama Sankar Roy of Teota to introduce the cultivation of rheā fibre in Khānsāmā out-post. It should be said, however, that Mr. Payter was a farmer of the Government Khās Mahāls and not strictly speaking

a zamindār. It would be dangerous to assert positively that this abstention on the part of the zamindārs from interference with the agricultural operations of their tenants is altogether unwise, and it remains, I think, to be proved that the cultivator does not know his own business best in such matters. At the same time the attitude of the landlords is rather due to a lack of interest than to any other motive.

Works of improvement such as irrigation canals, embankments, etc., are rarely undertaken by owners of land in normal years, though in times of stress something of the sort has occasionally been done, more perhaps with the object of providing work for the distressed cultivators than with an eye to the intrinsic value of the improvement. It should be said in fairness to the zamindārs that this attitude of non-interference which they generally adopt towards their *raiyats* has also its good side. If the latter do not get much active help from their landlords, at all events they rarely have to complain of harshness or injustice, while in bad seasons the zamindārs are accustomed cheerfully to allow their dues to stand over till the cultivators can afford to pay them.

CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES AND STAFF.

The area of the district was formerly very much greater than it is now, including as it did the greater portion of the present districts of Bogrā and Māldā and considerable tracts now included in Rājshāhi, Rangpur and Purneā. Buchanan Hamilton estimated it at 5,374 square miles. At the time of the Revenue Survey (1857—61) it had fallen to 4,586 square miles. At the census of 1872 the area was taken as 4,142 square miles, while the area included within the present boundaries of the district is 3,946 square miles only. The object aimed at in thus gradually reducing the size of the district was improved administration. When Dinājpur first came under British rule in 1765 it was notorious for the lawlessness of its inhabitants, and a brief experience showed that it was impossible for an ordinary district staff to cope successfully with the dacoits and river pirates with which this large tract of country was infested. The following is a brief account of the changes in area which have occurred from the year 1794-95 onwards. Between this year and 1800-01 a large number of estates, hitherto included in Dinājpur, were made over to Purneā, Rangpur and Rājshāhi. No further change occurred till 1833 when considerable transfers were made to Bogrā and Māldā. In 1864-65 the large parganā Khattā was detached from Dinājpur and annexed to Bogrā, and between 1868 and 1870 both Bogrā and Māldā received further slices of Dinājpur territory. Finally in 1897-98 the whole of thānā Mahādebpur in the south of the district was transferred to Rājshāhi.

The criminal and revenue jurisdictions in the district have never been coterminous. The first has always been regulated by the natural boundaries of the district while the latter is regulated by the old division of the country into parganās. Thus an estate included in the Tauzi roll of Dinājpur but situated in the heart of the Rangpur district is subject to the revenue jurisdiction of the Dinājpur authorities while falling within the criminal jurisdiction of the Magistrate of Rangpur. The criminal and civil jurisdictions, on the other hand, coincide.

The Sub-divisional system of administration was first introduced in the year 1860, when Mr. Clementson, an uncovenanted Deputy Collector and Deputy Magistrate, with a small office staff, was stationed at Thākurgāon. This Sub-divisional Office continued in existence till September 1867, when it was abolished as there was very little work for the Sub-divisional Officer and his staff. In 1887 the greater portion of the northern half of the

district was formed into the present Thākurgāon Sub-division and placed in charge of a Deputy Collector of the Provincial Civil Service. The remainder of the district continued under the direct supervision of the Collector till November 1904, when the five thānās of Bālurghāt, Gangarāmpur, Porshā, Patnitolā, and Phulbāri were separated from the rest of the district to form the Bālurghāt Sub-division and placed like Thākurgāon under a Deputy Collector.

At head-quarters the sanctioned staff consists of five Deputy Collectors, of whom four are generally possessed of first and the fifth of second or third class magisterial powers. Of late years, owing to increase of work, it has generally been thought necessary to supplement this staff by another Deputy or one or two Sub-Deputy Collectors. Besides the Deputy Collector in charge, an assistant, in the person of a Sub-Deputy Collector, is generally stationed at Thākurgāon.

There are no Government estates in this district. The single resumed estate is a small one and is in general charge of a Sub-Deputy Collector. A manager is employed under the Collector for each of the estates which he administers under the Court of Wards, provided the incomes of the individual estates are large enough to justify the expenditure involved. Where there are several such estates so small as to be unable to afford separate managers, they are commonly placed collectively in charge of one general manager.

REVENUE.

Owing to the frequent changes which have taken place in the area of the district, it is difficult to compare the revenue at one period with that at another. Notwithstanding the shrinkage in the size of the district, the revenue in the long period between 1787—1871 showed a fairly steady tendency to rise. This is accounted for by the fact that, although the land revenue decreased according as estates were transferred to other districts, the receipts from the other main heads of revenue rose more than in proportion. In 1860-61 the revenue received a substantial increase from the income-tax which was introduced in that year. In 1892-93 the total revenues of the district were Rs. 23,22,864. In 1897-98 a fall of over a lakh in land revenue, occasioned by the transfer of thānā Mahādebpur to Rājshāhi, brought the income of the district down to Rs. 22,10,865. In the last ten years or so there has been little change, the revenue in 1909-10 being slightly above 23 lakhs.

Land revenue.

The earliest settlement of which we have any information was made in 1728 in the reign of Rājā Rāmnāth, the revenue payable to the Subādār of Bengal being fixed at Rs. 12,49,816. Through the able management of the Rājā, who was a favourite with the dominant power, this assessment remained unchanged till his death in 1760. In 1762 the assessment was more than doubled, the large sum of Rs. 26,44,733 being made payable as revenue. Four and a half lakhs of this remained uncollected, and in 1765, the first year of British rule, the demand was reduced to Rs. 18,28,144. There was little alteration in the demand during

the ensuing nine years, but, as great difficulty was experienced in collecting the revenue in full, in 1774 a further reduction to Rs. 14,60,444 was made. The assessment was in terms of siccā rupees and was equivalent to Rs. 15,57,806 Company's rupees. It applied, however, to the Dinājpur Rāj estates only, and there is reason to believe that something like 1½ lakhs of land revenue were paid by other smaller estates in the district. The revenue of these was presumably collected by the Company's servants direct. In 1780 Rājā Baidyanāth, with whom settlement had hitherto been made, died, and for the two years 1781 and 1782 the Dinājpur Rāj estate was farmed out to Rājā Devi Singh of Dilwārpur in Murshidābād, at a revenue of siccā rupees 16,60,444 or 17,41,140 Company's rupees. On the expiry of the two years Raja Devi Singh was removed on account of mismanagement and oppression, and the former assessment was reverted to. In 1787 we learn that the revenue assessed on the estates not included in the Dinājpur zamindāri was siccā rupees 1,52,445. Thus the total land revenue of the district in this year came to 16,12,889 siccā or 17,20,515 Company's rupees. In 1791 a decennial settlement was made, which in 1793 was made permanent. No appreciable change in the assessment took place. Between 1796 and 1800 the greater portion of the Rājā's estates were sold for arrears of revenue, and a number of smaller estates were formed which were settled with the purchasers in perpetuity. In 1808 the land revenue was 17½ lakhs which must have represented something like 75 per cent. of the gross rental of the assessed estates at the time. This total was gradually reduced as the boundaries of the district were circumscribed, and the demand is now Rs. 15,20,500 on 764 estates. The single resumed estate which is still in the hands of Government has been temporarily settled at Rs. 50. So the total land revenue demand is Rs. 15,20,550, which is estimated to be equivalent to about 50 per cent of the gross rental of the district, the incidence per cultivated acre being Re. 1-3-5. It is thus evident that the value of the zamindārs' estates has increased materially in the last 100 years in comparison with the land revenue demand.

Stamps. Next to land revenue the receipts from judicial and non-judicial stamps are the most important source of income. The increase in litigation, especially civil litigation, and the growing importance of registration have brought about a corresponding steady increase in the receipts under this head. In 1871-72 the income from stamps was Rs. 1,74,120; in 1892-93 it was Rs. 2,47,076; in 1901-02 it amounted to Rs. 2,83,522; while in 1909-10 it had reached the respectable figure of Rs. 3,39,974. Of this total Rs. 2,28,735 were derived from the sale of judicial, and Rs. 1,11,239 from that of non-judicial stamps.

Cesses. Road and public works cesses are levied at the maximum rate of one anna in the rupee. The first valuation was made in 1875. In 1892-93 the demand stood at Rs. 1,97,247. By 1904-05

in consequence of the transfer of thānā Mahādebpur to Rājshāhi, it had fallen to Rs. 1,66,421. In this year a general revaluation was held, with the result that there was a substantial increase in the demand, which in the year 1909-10 amounted to Rs. 2,13,861, of which Rs. 2,10,060 was payable by 1,174 revenue-paying estates, and Rs. 3,801 by 186 revenue-free estates. The number of estates assessed to cesses is thus 1,360 while the number of tenures so assessed is 77,202. The number of recorded shareholders of estates and tenures is 4,014 and 77,202 respectively.

Excise. The receipts from excise have risen steadily during the last 60 years and, representing as they do the consumption of luxuries, are a fair indication of the increase in prosperity. In 1850-51 these receipts amounted to Rs. 47,220 ; in 1870-71 they were Rs. 93,225 ; in 1892-93 they had risen to Rs. 1,19,546 ; in 1901-02 the total receipts were Rs. 1,43,481. In 1908-09 the abnormally large total of Rs. 2,76,775 was attained. The reason for this was that Government had decided to introduce the central distillery system into the district from 1909-10, and in consequence there was very keen competition amongst the liquor shop-keepers for the out-still licenses for 1908-09, in the hope of making a final profit before the introduction of the new system, which they imagined would materially reduce their gains. In 1909-10 the receipts dropped to Rs. 2,16,118, which was, nevertheless, an advance on the figures for 1907-08. Of this total the sale of country liquor accounted for Rs. 99,656, or nearly half. This liquor is consumed almost entirely by what might be called the foreign population, mostly consisting of low-caste Hindus from Behār and neighbouring tracts, who have settled in the district and are employed as agricultural labourers, carters, railway coolies, etc. The shifting population of earthworkers and agricultural labourers, who come from the west and stay for the cold weather, also consumes a good deal of country liquor. The indigenous population, more than half of whom are Muhammadans, consume very little liquor except *tāri*, and not much of that. In 1909-10, after the abolition of the out-still system, a bonded warehouse was opened at Pārbatipur, from which the holders of licenses for the sale of country liquor obtain their supplies. All the liquor issued is of a certified strength and is sold to the licensees at a fixed price inclusive of duty. A small amount of *tāri* is manufactured in the southern portion of the district, which is the only locality where the *tāl* or toddy-palm grows in any numbers. Fermented *tāri* is made from this tree while unfermented *tāri*, which is consumed to some extent, is generally made from the date-palm. In 1909-10 the income derived from these licenses was only Rs. 3,297. A large number of licenses for home brewing of *pachwāi*, a kind of beer made from rice, are issued every year to the Sāntāl and Chotā Nāgpur settlers. The rate is Re. 1-8-0 per license per year, and the liquor made is supposed to be for home

consumption only. The amount realised from these licenses in 1909-10 was Rs. 5,378. The large sum of Rs. 69,257 was realised in the same year from the sale of *gānjā* and other preparations of *Cannabis Indica.* This deleterious drug is consumed by all classes, but its use is regarded as a vice and few will admit that they are addicted to it. After country liquor and *gānjā* the only other important source of excise revenue is opium, from the duty and license fees on which Rs. 34,792 was realised in 1909-10. This drug is not consumed to anything like the extent that it is in many parts of the province, and indeed, considering the population and the malarious character of the district, the consumption is small. It is in use amongst the indigenous population chiefly, especially the Rājbansis and Paliyās. There are two licenses only for the sale of imported liquor. One of these is issued for the railway refreshment room at Pārbatipur for Rs. 180, and the other for Rs. 3,260 to a Bengali firm in Dinājpur town, which sells cheap spirits to Indians of the middle and upper classes.

Income-tax.

The Income Tax Act was introduced into the district in 1860-61 and realised in that year Rs. 1,45,980, the number of assessees being 4,920 and the minimum taxable income Rs. 200. In 1862-63 the minimum taxable income was raised to Rs. 500 and the number of assessees and the amount realised fell to 1,390 and Rs. 76,205 respectively. In 1871-72 the minimum taxable income was raised to Rs. 750 and the amount realised fell to Rs. 20,567. In the following year the minimum was again raised to Rs. 1,000 and the revenue realised was only Rs. 14,834. In 1886-87 the minimum of Rs. 500 was reverted to and the amount realised rose to Rs 54,056, the number of assessees being 3,013. In 1901-02 Rs. 66,544 was realised from 3,586 assessees. In 1903-04 the minimum taxable income was again raised to Rs. 1,000 and in the year 1909-10 we find that Rs. 45,068 was realised from 1,080 assessees.

Registration

There are eight offices for the registration of assurances under Act XVI of 1908. At Dinājpur the Special Sub-Registrar deals with documents presented there and also assists the District Magistrate, who is *ex-officio* District Registrar, in supervising the work of the Sub-Registrars in charge of the other registration offices. The number of registrations is gradually on the increase. The average number of documents registered annually during the period of five years ending in 1899 was 23,390. The number for the same period ending in 1909 was 38,904. About one half of this number represented mortgage-deeds of *ryati* holdings.

The marginal statement shows the number of documents registered and the receipts and expenditure at each office in 1909.

Office.	Number of documents registered.	Receipts.	Expenditure.
		Rs.	Rs.
Sadar ...	7,669	1,115	7,253
Thākurgāon,	4,329	4,263	2,543
Birganj ...	4,072	3,667	2,205
Pirganj ...	5,014	4,664	2,488
Phulbāri ...	5,730	5,299	2,608
Rāiganj ...	3,258	3,206	1,668
Bālurghāt ...	6,074	6,216	2,883
Lāhiri Hāt ...	2,758	3,064	2,096
Total ...	38,904	41,494	23,744

Owing to increase of work a joint Sub-Registry Office was opened at Sadar on the 1st April 1910.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE. Civil justice.

The staff entertained for the administration of civil justice consists of the District Judge, who is also District Judge of Jalpāiguri district, one Sub-Judge, who is also Sub-Judge of Jalpāiguri, and five Munsifs, *viz.*, two Munsifs of Dinājpur, one of Thākurgāon, one of Bālurghāt and one of Rāiganj. Civil work is increasing steadily, more especially suits under the Tenancy Act. Out of an average of some 20,000 suits instituted during the last three years about one half were instituted under this Act.

Criminal justice.

Criminal justice is administered by the District and Sessions Judge, the District Magistrate, and the Deputy and Sub-Deputy Magistrates stationed at Dinājpur, Thākurgāon, and Bālurghāt. The sanctioned staff at Dinājpur consists of the District Magistrate, four Deputy Magistrates of the 1st class, one Deputy Magistrate of the 2nd or 3rd class and a Sub-Deputy Magistrate of the 2nd or 3rd class. The Sub-divisional Magistrates of Thākurgāon and Bālurghāt are always vested with 1st class powers and the former generally has a Sub-Deputy Magistrate with 3rd class powers to assist him. Besides these stipendiary Magistrates, there are at Dinājpur two Honorary Magistrates with 1st class powers sitting singly and a bench of Honorary Magistrates with 3rd class powers. At Bālurghāt and Rāiganj there are benches of Honorary Magistrates with 3rd class powers.

Crime.

A hundred years or so ago the district was notorious for dacoits and river pirates and every kind of violent crime was common. From the remarks of Major Sherwill, the Revenue Surveyor, in 1863, it is apparent that even then the character of the district had undergone a considerable change. He says that although murders were common and dacoities not infrequent the general character of the people was peaceable. Nowadays cases of heinous crime are rare. A few murders are committed every year and an occasional case of dacoity occurs, but these dacoities are rarely accompanied by murder and the amount of property looted is generally small. Some of the worst dacoities have been perpetrated within measurable distance of the Purneā and Māldā borders, the bad characters of these districts being rather fond of committing depredations on the more peaceable inhabitants of

Dinājpur. In 1908-09 dacoities were exceptionally numerous owing, it is believed in great measure, to the scarcity prevailing in this and the neighbouring districts. Cases of rape are rare and serious rioting, so common in some of the eastern districts, is practically unknown. Arson is fairly common, especially in the southern portion of the district. The offence is, however, seldom brought home to any one, and there is some reason to suppose that a good many of the cases reported are the result of accident. Thefts and petty burglaries are numerous, though the amount of property stolen is generally small. Disputes about land with their inevitable accompaniment of forgery, perjury and the fabrication of false evidence are common as is the case elsewhere, and the cultivator shows the usual tendency to try and drag what are really civil disputes into the criminal courts.

For police purposes the district is divided into 15 thānās or police circles, *viz.*, in the head-quarters Sub-division—Kotwāli (394 square miles), Kāliyāganj (300 square miles), Rāiganj (243 square miles), Pārbatipur (166 square miles), Bansihāri (257 square miles) and Nawābganj (238 square miles); in the Thākurgāon Sub-division—Thākurgāon (441 square miles), Rānisankail (189 square miles), Pirganj (237 square miles), and Birganj (304 square miles); and in the Bālurghāt Sub-division—Bālurghāt (291 square miles), Gangārāmpur (262 square miles), Porshā (202 square miles), Patnitolā (262 square miles), and Phulbāri (160 square miles). Besides these there are eight independent out-posts, namely, Ātwāri, Bāliyādangi, Khānsāmā, Hemtābād, Itāhār, Chirirbandar, Kumārganj, and Ghorāghāt. There are thus 23 centres for the investigation of crime. The regular police force consisted in 1909 of one Superintendent, one Assistant Superintendent, four Inspectors, 50 Sub-Inspectors, 55 Head-constables, and 387 constables, a total force of 496 officers and men or one policeman to every 7·9 square miles and to every 3,147 of the population. The cost of maintaining this force was Rs. 1,44,133. The rural force for the watch and ward of villages in the interior is composed of 3,636 chaukidārs and 324 daffādārs. There are also ten town chaukidārs employed in Dinājpur town. With the exception of these town chaukidārs and one chaukidār employed at the head-quarters of the Thākurgāon Sub-division, who draw Rs. 6 per mensem, all the other chaukidārs in the district are paid at the rate of Rs. 5, daffādārs getting Rs. 6. Police.

There is a District Jail at Dinājpur with accommodation for 308 prisoners, *viz.*, barracks for 204 male convicts, 27 female convicts, 36 under-trial prisoners and 5 civil prisoners, cells for 4 male convicts, and a hospital with 32 beds. There are sub-jails at Thākurgāon and Bālurghāt with accommodation for 18 and 20 prisoners respectively. Prisoners are kept in these sub-jails up to 14 days. Those sentenced to longer terms of imprisonment are forwarded to the District Jail once a week, when a police escort is available. Jails

CHAPTER XII.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

District Board.

Outside the Municipality of Dinajpur local affairs are managed by the District Board and the Local Boards of Thākurgāon and Bālurghāt subordinate to it. The District Board consists of 22 members, of whom the District Magistrate is *ex officio* Chairman while the Civil Surgeon, the Road Cess Deputy Collector, and the Sadar Deputy Inspector of Schools are *ex officio* members, eight are elected by the Local Boards of Thākurgāon and Bālurghāt, and ten are nominated. In 1909-10 the number of Muhammadans on the Board was eight. It might be urged that as Muhammadans constitute 48·84 per cent. of the total population their representation on the Board is hardly adequate, but owing to the backward state of education amongst them and to their disinclination for public affairs, it is difficult to get men suitable for membership. It should also be borne in mind that nearly all the large landowners are Hindus.

Income.

During the decade ending 1901-02 the average annual income of the Board was Rs. 1,71,500 of which Rs. 83,000 was derived from the road cess. In 1904-05 the income, excluding the opening balance, was Rs. 1,64,500 out of which the road cess accounted for Rs. 79,000 and Government contributions for Rs. 18,000. In 1909-10 the income from all sources, excluding the opening balance of Rs. 36,000, amounted to Rs. 2,28,500. Of this Rs. 1,05,000 was realised from road cess, Rs. 26,000 from rent of pounds and sale proceeds of impounded cattle, Rs. 4,500 from rent of ferries, while provincial revenues contributed Rs. 35,000. It will be seen that the income from road cess has risen materially of recent years, as a result of a general revaluation of the district completed in 1906. Ferries are not a very important asset, as competition for them is not great, which is due in great measure to the fact that for some seven months of the year nearly all the rivers are fordable. There are 144 pounds from which a steady income is derived. Of the total income from this source the sale proceeds of unclaimed cattle realise some Rs. 10,000.

Expenditure.

The average annual expenditure during the ten years ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 1,67,000, of which Rs. 89,000 was spent on civil works, Rs. 29,000 on education, and only Rs. 2,500 on medical. The expenditure in 1904-05 was Rs. 1,91,000 out of which civil works accounted for Rs. 1,17,000, education Rs. 38,000, and medical Rs. 4,000. In 1909-10 the expenditure totalled Rs. 2,59,000 of which Rs. 1,33,000 was spent on communications, Rs. 32,500 on education, and Rs. 12,000 on medical. The more liberal

expenditure under this latter head is due to the fact that the local officials and gentry have become alive to the unhealthiness of the district, with the result that several new dispensaries have recently been opened and other measures for combating disease have been adopted. There is, however, still room for improvement. The latter half of 1908-09 and the early part of the following year was a time of scarcity caused by failure of the autumn and winter crops for want of rain, and Rs. 46,000 and Rs. 32,000 respectively were spent on famine relief operations in these years. The heaviest expenditure incurred by the District Board is on communications. It maintains five miles of metalled roads and 988 miles of unmetalled roads, besides 346 miles of village tracks. The cost of maintaining these in 1909-10 was Rs. 660, Rs. 45, and Rs. 12 per mile respectively. The number of maintained and aided schools is 770 with 23,493 pupils. Of these 742 are Primary Schools, 10 are Middle Vernacular Schools, 16 Middle English Schools, and 2 are High English Schools. Of the ordinary income of the Board 7·02 per cent. is spent on medical relief and sanitation. It maintains five dispensaries, while seven dispensaries receive substantial grants-in-aid. It also employs two supernumerary hospital assistants, whose duty it is to visit localities affected by cholera or small-pox, and, besides treating the sufferers, to check the spread of the disease by the adoption of sanitary measures. The Board maintains a veterinary dispensary in the town of Dinājpur, and employs an itinerant Veterinary Assistant to inoculate cattle in the interior against rinderpest and treat any other diseases of cattle which may be brought to his notice.

LOCAL BOARDS.

The Local Boards of Thākurgāon and Bālurghāt have 11 and 9 members respectively, of whom 10 are Muhammadans and the rest Hindus. The Deputy Collectors in charge of the Sub-divisions are usually Chairmen. The powers delegated to these Boards are small. Every year a sum of about Rs. 1,000 is set apart by the District Board for each of them, and this constitutes their income for the year. They are expected to arrange for the repair of certain village roads through the agency of the villagers themselves and have no staff. The administration of pounds, ferries, primary education and village sanitation is also entrusted to them, but in point of fact the supervision exercised by them in such matters is slight. The office work involved by their proceedings is done in each case by a clerk of the Sub-divisional Office who gets a small addition to his pay for doing it. Bills for expenditure incurred by them have to be passed by the Chairman of the District Board. Eight of the District Board members are elected by these Boards, *viz.*, five by that of Thākurgāon, and three by that of Bālurghāt.

MUNICIPALITY.

There is only one Municipality in the district, namely that of Dinājpur, established in 1869. It is administered by a Municipal Board composed of 15 Commissioners, of whom five are nominated and the rest elected. The area within municipal limits

is some four square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 3,119, representing 21·8 per cent. of the population, a very high proportion. The Pulhāt quarter, in the extreme south of the town, has recently been included in the Municipality.

Income. The average annual income of the Municipality in the decade ending 1901-02 was Rs. 35,000 and the expenditure Rs. 31,000. Since 1901-02 the income has been steadily increasing, partly as a result of the extension of municipal limits and partly of more careful assessment and a more rigorous enforcement of the Municipal Act. A revision of assessment was effected in 1901-02 and had the effect of materially increasing the income in the following year. In 1903-04 this had risen to Rs. 45,000, the expenditure being Rs. 43,000. In 1908-09 a further revision of assessment was carried out, and in 1909-10 the Hackney Carriage Act was introduced, and license fees were charged on carriages plying for hire from the 1st October in that year. In 1909-10 we find the income of the Municipality totalling Rs. 72,810 from all sources. Of this Rs. 38,030 was derived from municipal rates and taxes, of which the most important were a tax on animals and vehicles Rs. 6,719, conservancy (including a charge for scavenging and a latrine tax) Rs. 9,719, and a tax on persons according to circumstances and property (the most important source of revenue) Rs. 14,490. Tolls on roads and ferries are not an important source of income and realised only Rs. 2,785 in 1909-10, and this as the result of especially keen competition. Dinājpur is one of the most heavily taxed municipalities in the province, the incidence of taxation being Rs. 2-10-5 per head of population.

Expenditure. The expenditure in 1909-10 was Rs. 56,019, in addition to Rs. 16,529 allocated for advances and deposits. The last instalment of a Rs. 10,000 loan from Government was paid off in 1908-09, and the Municipality is not in debt at present. The heaviest expenditure, Rs. 16,125, was incurred on conservancy, including road sweeping, latrine clearing, drain flushing, etc. Hospitals and dispensaries, represented by the male and female hospitals in the town, constituted the next heaviest charge, namely, Rs. 14,126. The charge under this head was an exceptionally heavy one as the share of the cost of these institutions contributed by the Municipality in an ordinary year averages about Rs. 4,000. Rs. 7,114 was spent on repairs to roads and Rs. 3,555 and Rs. 3,456 on education and lighting respectively.

Dinājpur like many other municipalities in the province, is in urgent need of a better system of drainage and better lighting. As regards the first, it is seldom that more than Rs. 1,000 can be spared in a year for construction or repair of drains, and to any one who knows the town it is obvious that this is quite inadequate. A scheme for making a portion, at all events, of the Kachai Nālā, which receives most of the sewage of the town, *pukkā*, has been on the tapis for years, but this would mean borrowing

from Government, and, as a larger scheme for improving the beds of both the Kachāi and Ghāgrā streams is under the consideration of Government, nothing has been attempted so far. In 1908-09 the greater portion of the Gudri Bāzār, a daily market in the heart of the town, the property of the Mahārājā, was burnt down. As it was merely a collection of shabby huts with very little system or arrangement about it, the loss was not serious. Early in 1909 the Sanitary Commissioner prepared a plan for reconstructing this market on improved lines with corrugated iron roofed sheds, *pukkā* plinths, and a better system of drainage, but the plan was not accepted on the score of expense. In 1909-10, however, a shed with a corrugated iron roof, on the plan approved by the Sanitary Commissioner, was constructed for the use of the fish and vegetable dealers. A more detailed account of the town will be found in the article on Dinājpur in Chapter XIV.

CHAPTER XIII.

EDUCATION.

Progress of Education.

It is impossible to say when education, properly so-called, was first started in the Dinājpur district. Buchanan Hamilton, writing about 100 years ago, gives some account of a system of higher and lower education, which he found already established. The Primary education of the day was imparted in the *pāthsālās* of which there were 119. The course of instruction consisted of reading and writing the vernacular and simple arithmetic. It differed, in fact, little from the education still imparted in Lower Primary schools. The teachers were called *gurus*, as they still are, and were entirely dependent on the fees paid by their pupils. In Dinājpur town the average number of pupils in a *pāthsālā* was about 20, and the fees from 4 to 8 annas a month, but in the mofussil the average number of pupils was about 12, and the fees from 1 to 4 annas a month. Thus the pay of a *guru* would amount to some Rs. 2 to Rs. 7-8 a month, but they were doubtless fed and lodged at the expense of the people. These *pāthsālās* were Hindu institutions, and Buchanan Hamilton does not say whether Muhammadan boys attended them or not. They, in all probability, did. Besides these, there were 9 *muktābs* or Muhammadan schools proper, in which Persian literature was taught. The education imparted seems rather to have been in the nature of Secondary education, and suited to the sons of well-to-do persons. Hindus attended them freely, as a knowledge of Persian was considered a necessary accomplishment for every gentleman in those days. Higher Hindu education was imparted in academies called *chauvāris*, kept by Hindu *pandits* or *adyāpaks*. There were 16 of these. The course consisted of Sanskrit, law, metaphysics and kindred subjects, and was extremely long, lasting apparently for 20 or 30 years, if any one took the whole course. Learning had not extended very far amongst the masses, and Hamilton estimated that not more than one-sixteenth of the male population were literate. This was probably an over-estimate. Women in those days were entirely uneducated.

About the middle of the 19th century the idea gained ground with the authorities that Government was responsible for the education of the people under its rule, and that the private institutions in which education had been hitherto carried on were no longer sufficient for their needs. The task was, however, considered too great for the resources of the State, and it was accordingly decided that the best plan was to guide and assist the existing schools

and colleges. In 1860-61 only 10 schools in the Dinājpur district were in receipt of aid from the State. Between that year and 1870-71, the number rose to 247, of which one was a Government English school, 8 were Government vernacular schools, 4 were aided English schools, 215 were aided vernacular schools, 18 were aided girls' schools, and one an aided training school. In 1856-57, the number of Hindu pupils attending Government or aided institutions was 404, and of Muhammadan 124. In 1870-71 the number had risen to 2,412 and 3,399 respectively. An interesting fact, which may be noticed in connection with the above statistics, is the great increase in the proportion of Muhammadan to Hindu pupils. Sir William Hunter in his statistical account of Dinājpur makes no mention of the *pāthsālās* and other private institutions, beyond saying that a large number existed, but did not come under inspection or furnish returns. The total cost of education to Government increased from some Rs. 6,000 in 1856-57 to some Rs. 37,000 in 1870-71.

In 1871, Sir George Campbell, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, inaugurated an improved system of primary education, under which a large number of indigenous village schools, which had previously received no assistance from the state, were admitted to the benefit of the grant-in-aid rules. In 1871-72 there were 284 Government and aided schools, attended on 31st March 1872 by 6,267 pupils. In 1872-73, after Sir George Campbell's scheme had been brought into operation, the number of Government and aided schools was returned at 456, attended on the 31st March 1873 by 8,174 pupils. Although the number of schools thus brought under the supervision of the Education Department had increased by 65 per cent. in a single year, this was effected at a merely nominal cost to the State, the Government grant having only increased from some Rs. 37,000 in 1871-72 to about Rs. 38,500 in 1872-73. The above account of this important step in the educational progress of the district is practically in Sir William Hunter's own words, but he takes no account of the curious fact that, whereas in 1871-72 there were no less than 22 aided girls' schools in the district, in 1872-73 the number had dropped to 3. This would, on the face of it, seem to have been a retrograde step, but it is fair to assume that the schools from which Government aid was thus withdrawn were inefficient, and were educational institutions only in name.

In 1882-83 we find the cause of education continuing to progress, though more slowly. The number of Primary schools had increased from 421 to 563, and the number of pupils reading in them from 7,095 to 13,243. The number of girls' schools had not increased, but a large number of girls were reading in boys' schools. In 1882 an Education Commission was appointed to enquire into the state of education in India, and in 1883 they recommended that the "elementary education of the masses, its

provision, extension, and improvement, should be that part of education to which the strenuous efforts of the State should be directed in a larger measure than before." The report for 1885-86 shows that this recommendation was beginning to bear fruit, and that a stricter control had begun to be exercised over the work of Primary schools. Government aid was withdrawn from a number of these, in which less than 10 boys were found to be reading, and a system of payment by results was introduced, under which the remuneration of the teacher depended largely on the progress made by the boys under his charge, as ascertained by periodical inspection. In 1886 the District and Local Boards were created, and all aided schools, not classed as Government schools, were placed under the former. In 1872-73 the total number of public institutions was 850, including one High English, 29 Middle, 817 Primary, and 3 Training schools, with a total of 21,039 pupils. The number of private institutions was 50, with 510 pupils. By the year 1901-02, the number of public institutions had increased to 1,002, with 25,815 pupils, while the number of private institutions had fallen to 25, with 327 pupils. The most noticeable changes in these ten years were the great increase in the scholars attending the High English school, the steady decline in popularity of the Middle Vernacular schools, the abolition of the 3 Training schools, and the recognition of 3 Sanskrit *tols*. Female education had advanced slightly, and the percentage of female scholars to the female population of school-going age had risen from ·7 to 1·4. About the end of this decade we find the necessity for extending the scope of education, and improving the means of imparting it, exercising the minds of the authorities. It was recognised that the system of lower education hitherto followed was defective, and that pupils derived little real benefit from their studies, owing to the form of these being too stereotyped. A committee of educational experts was appointed by the Government of Bengal to draw up a scheme of education, Secondary and Primary, "designed more to develop the minds of the boys than to strengthen their memories." The committee recommended that object-lesson teaching should be introduced. The pupil should be trained to observe and to think for himself. In the lower classes the teaching should take the form of object-lessons, the pupil being taught to distinguish between different natural objects, colours, etc. In the higher classes the elementary principles of sciences, such as botany, natural history, chemistry, etc., should be taught. The introduction of these principles into the schools of the district marked an important step in its educational progress.

The partition of Bengal in 1905 seems to have caused little or no change in the course of education in the district. The curricula sanctioned in 1901 by the Government of Bengal continued to be followed in the schools

In 1908-09 an effort was made toattract the better class of Muhammadan boys, and meet a want of that community

by introducing the teaching of Urdu in some Secondary and many Primary schools, a knowledge of Urdu being still considered as a necessary social accomplishment amongst Muhammadans, forming as it does the key to many of their religious books. An attempt was made in the same year to utilise existing *maktābs*, or Muhammadan Korān schools, as elementary schools, by introducing secular instruction in them. Both these measures, which had for their ultimate object the promotion of education amongst the Muhammadan community, were attended with satisfactory results. In this year also the cause of female education received an impetus by the introduction of the system of capitation grants to teachers for girls reading in boys' schools. The system promises well, and even in the first year attained some measure of success.

LITERATE POPULATION.

The progress of education in Dinājpur is marked by a steady increase in the proportion of literates to population. According to the Census statistics the number of literates per thousand males was 57 in 1881, 82 in 1891, and 99 in 1901, while the number of literates per thousand females was 1 in 1881 and 1891 respectively, and 3 in 1901. In 1911 the number of males rose to 108 per thousand and females 4 per thousand. The rapid rate of increase in the number of literates in recent years makes it evident that Buchanan Hamilton's estimate that one-sixteenth, or about 62 per thousand males, were literate in his day was greatly in excess of the facts. It is a matter for regret that in the Census of 1872 no account was taken of literates, but the figures already given should suffice to indicate the progress of education amongst the masses. In 1911, 99,088 persons, or 5·87 per cent. of the total population (10·8 males and ·4 females) could read and write. Of these 20,404 and 14,208 belonged to the Kotwāli (Dinājpur) and Thākurgāon thānās respectively. The reason why such a large proportion of literates was found in these two thānās was that they both contained head-quarters stations, the former of the district, and the latter of what was then the only sub-division. The sub-division of Bālurghāt was formed later, so we do not notice any particularly large number of literates in the Patirām thānā, in which Bālurghāt was included at that time. The Census figures further reveal the rather unexpected fact that the proportion of literates amongst Musulmāns is greater in nearly every thānā than amongst Hindus, in some, notably Pārbatipur and Bansihāri, considerably so. The cause of this probably is that a large proportion of the Hindus of the district are Rājbansis, a race distinguished rather by simplicity of character than literary tendencies. When it comes to higher education, involving a knowledge of English as distinct from a mere knowledge of reading and writing the vernacular, we find that out of a total of 4,720 persons with a knowledge of English in 1911, no less than 3,484 were Hindus, as against 1,129 Muhammadans. The backwardness of the latter in all that pertains to higher education, as exemplified by these figures, is borne

out by the facts of every-day life. When there is a question of filling a post demanding some education, such as a Sub-Inspectorship of police or excise, a Sub-Registrarship, or even a clerkship, with a native of the district, for one qualified Muhammadan candidate, four or five equally well or better qualified Hindus are forthcoming.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

In 1909-10 the number of public institutions was 882, and the number of pupils under instruction was 27,259, representing 11·59 per cent. of the children of school-going age (20·05 per cent. boys and 2·22 per cent. girls). The educational staff consists of two Deputy Inspectors of Schools subordinate to the Inspector of Schools, Rājshāhi Division—of these, the senior of the two is stationed at Dinājpur Sadar, and the other at Thākurgāon,—of 8 Sub-Inspectors of Schools, and of 11 Inspecting Pandits. The Deputy Inspectors are responsible for the efficient management of the Middle and upper Primary schools, the Sub-Inspectors for the proper supervision of Primary education, and the inspecting Pandits for the inspection of Primary schools, and also for the instruction of the *gurus* or teachers in methods of teaching. The policy of gradually abolishing the posts of Inspecting Pandit while strengthening the superior inspecting staff has recently been introduced.

SECONDARY EDUCATION.

Secondary schools include High schools, Middle English schools, and Middle Vernacular schools. The first teach up to the Matriculation Examination of the Calcutta University, while the latter two have a shorter course extending up to the 6th class of High schools. All have Primary departments attached to them. In a High school all stages of instruction from the Lower Primary to the University Matriculation Examination standard, and in a Middle school all stages from the Lower Primary to the 6th class of High schools are provided for. To summarise briefly, a High school is a Middle school with four additional higher classes; a Middle school is equivalent to an Upper Primary school with two higher classes attached to it; and an Upper Primary school is equivalent to a Lower Primary school with two additional higher classes. Till 1909 the Bengali course prescribed for the Middle English and Middle Vernacular schools was the same. In that year some changes were made and the courses are now different.

High schools.

There are three High schools for boys with 732 pupils on the rolls. Of these one, the Zilla school at Dinājpur, is maintained by Government. The schools at Thākurgāon and Bālurghāt, which have only recently been raised from the status of Middle English schools, continue to be aided by the District Board on condition that such assistance will be withdrawn as soon as the schools are given grants-in-aid from Provincial Revenues. Both schools have been temporarily affiliated to the Calcutta University and possess the privilege of preparing boys for the Matriculation Examination. It is probable that both will receive permanent

recognition shortly. The number of pupils attending the three above-mentioned High schools is 413, 127 and 192 respectively.

There are 22 Middle English schools, including three Middle Mādrāsās. Of these two are maintained by the District Board, one by the Municipality, 14 are aided, and 5 are unaided. Including 321 pupils attending the Middle Mādrāsās there are in all 1,686 pupils on the rolls. Middle English schools.

Counting one girls' school, there are 11 Middle Vernacular schools, teaching up to the Middle scholarship course, the vernacular being the only recognised medium of instruction. Owing to the increased demand for an English education these schools have greatly declined in popularity in recent years, parents preferring to send their boys to Middle English schools. The number of Middle Vernacular institutions is consequently steadily decreasing. The number of boys on the rolls is 568. Middle Vernacular schools.

There are altogether 798 Primary schools for boys, attended by 23,218 pupils. Of these, 63 with 2,547 pupils are Upper Primary schools, and 736 with 20,671 pupils are Lower Primary schools. Besides these, there are 37 Lower Primary schools for girls, at which 700 children are taught. PRIMARY EDUCATION.

Three Guru training schools are maintained by Government at Dinājpur, Lāhirihāt, and Kāsipur (in Patnitolā). The number of Primary school teachers undergoing training in these three schools is 40. Four Sanskrit *tols*, three Junior Mādrāsās, and three Middle Mādrāsas, provide instruction in oriental classics. Of the *tols*, two are aided by the District Board and the Municipality, and two are unaided. The three Middle Mādrāsās are unaided, but the three Junior receive aid from the District Board. Amongst special schools may also be reckoned eight secularised *maktābs* or Korān schools, which also receive aid from the District Board. The secularisation consists in the addition to the original curriculum of these schools of various secular subjects such as arithmetic, geography, and the like. The number of scholars reading in *tols* is 31, in Middle Mādrāsās 321, in junior Mādrāsās 284, and in secularised *maktābs* 141. Under the head of special education mention may perhaps be made of six night schools, which are attended by the sons of day-labourers and cultivators, who assist their parents in the fields during the daytime. The number of pupils attending these schools is 262, of whom 90 are Hindus, 148 Muhammadans, and 24 aborigines. Four of these schools are aided, and two unaided. Instruction is given up to the Lower Primary standard. SPECIAL SCHOOLS.

The importance of hostels as a means of providing accommodation for boys whose homes are at a distance from school, and of enforcing discipline, is being gradually more recognised by the public, and there are now seven of these institutions in existence in the district. Of these the most important is a fine Muhammadan hostel attached to the Zillā school at Dinājpur, which has only recently been opened. Accommodation for 40 boarders has HOSTELS.

been provided and 34 are already in residence. This school has so far no Hindu hostel attached to it, but one is in contemplation.

Besides this, the Thākurgāon High school and the Dinājpur Guru training school provide hostel accommodation for both Hindus and Muhammadans, while the Kāsipur Guru Training school provides such accommodation for Hindus, and the Rājārāmpur Middle English school for Muhammadans only. Of these hostels, four, *i.e.*, the three at Dinājpur, and that at Kāsipur, are maintained by Government, the two at Thākurgāon are aided, while the Rājārāmpur hostel alone is unaided.

PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS. Private institutions, *i.e.*, institutions which do not conform to the standard recognised by the Education Department, include 8 Advanced Arabic and Persian schools, with 141 pupils, 6 Korān schools with 134 pupils, and 13 undenominational elementary schools with 220 pupils.

EDUCATION OF WOMEN. Female education in the district is still very backward, and it is doubtful whether girls' schools will ever become popular with parents till a sufficient supply of female teachers is available. At present the number of these is very small, there being only two or three altogether. The teachers in girls' schools are in consequence generally men, and are chosen rather for their respectability than for their educational attainments. Of recent years, an attempt has been made to advance the cause of female education by giving a capitation allowance to the *gurus* in boys' Primary schools, for each girl studying in a boys' school. Special prizes are also awarded to girls. As a result of these measures, besides the 746 girls receiving instruction in girls' schools there are 1,776 girls reading in boys' schools. The system works very well, and it is noticeable that the girls educated in boys' schools are generally better taught than those in girls' schools, probably as the result of competition with the boys. Of the 38 girls' schools in the district, two, the model schools at Bālurghāt and Churāman, are managed by Government, 32 are aided by Government or Local Bodies, and 4 are unaided. Of the 2,459 girls under instruction in the district, 1,685 or 68·5 per cent. are Muhammadans. This fact is due partly to the existence of a larger number of Muhammadans in the district, and partly to the fact that the large proportion of Hindus belong to backward races such as Poliyās and Rājbansis.

EDUCATION OF MUHAMMADANS. The number of Muhammadans receiving instruction in schools of all kinds is 17,782 or 64·07 per cent. of the total number of pupils. They account for over 60 per cent. of the total number of pupils attending public, and for over 77 per cent. of those attending private institutions. In the matter of elementary education they are in advance of the Hindus, but in advanced education they are still a long way behind, though it is probable that they will not remain so very much longer.

CHAPTER XIV.

GAZETTEER.

Alwakhowa.—This is the second most important cattle fair in the district, and one of the largest of its kind in the province. The fair is held annually in October or November on the occasion of the Rāsh Purnimā festival in honour of Krishnā, and lasts from 8 to 15 days. The cattle sold there are mostly cart bullocks of the Hānsi type bred in Behār. The price of a pair varies from Rs. 100 to Rs. 200 and a very fine pair suitable for *shampani* use may fetch as much as Rs. 300. Large numbers of elephants are brought for sale from the surrounding districts and from Assam, while from the Punjab come herds of camels and *dumbā* or fat-tailed sheep. Both of the latter are for eating, it being considered the correct thing amongst the better class Muhammadans to give a feast on the occasion of the Id festival at which camel forms the *pièce de resistance*, while fat-tailed sheep are considered a great delicacy amongst all classes and fetch a very high price. A fair number of ponies are brought for sale from Bhutān and Behār, but it is difficult to pick up a good animal. Besides the sale of livestock a brisk trade is carried on in cloth, metalware, etc., the shop-keepers belonging mostly to the locality and moving from one fair to another during the cold season.

There is no village properly so-called at Ālwākhowā, but Bāliyā village is not far off and the proprietor of the fair, a local zamindār, has his house in the vicinity.

Ālwākhowā is situated in the Thākurgāon Sub-division some 18 miles north-west of Thākurgāon close to the main road running through Bāliyādangi and Lāhirihāt.

Balurghat.—Head-quarters village of the Sub-division of the same name, situated in 25° 13′ N. and 88° 47′ E., on the banks of the Ātrāi river, containing a population of 3,220. It lies 32 miles to the south of Dinājpur town and is connected with it by a main road. It contains the Sub-divisional offices, civil and criminal courts, a registration office, and a high school. The latter has some 200 pupils and is a promising institution. There is a large and well found hospital-dispensary maintained principally by private subscriptions, the local zamindār, Bābu Rājendra Nāth Sanyāl, being a liberal subscriber. This gentleman, who lives in the immediate vicinity, was not long since a ward under the Court of Wards and still maintains the former European Manager's bungalow as a guest-house, at which Government officials on tour are made welcome. There is little worth describing in the village of Bālurghāt itself. It is a very ordinary

Bengali village in appearance, though, being situated on the high banks of a fairly large river, it is well drained and healthier than many of the villages in the district. The view from both banks of the river is picturesque enough, especially in the rains.

Balurghat Sub-division.—Southern Sub-division of the district, lying between 24° 55′ and 25° 32′ N., and 88° 25′ and 89° 0′ E., with an area of 1,177 square miles. It contains a population of 447,343, the density being 328 per square mile. The number of villages is 2,631. The Sub-division is divided for administrative purposes into five police circles, *viz.*, Bālurghāt, Gangārāmpur, Porshā, Patnitolā and Phulbāri. It also contains the independent police out-post of Kumārganj which was separated from the Kotwāli thānā of the Sadar Sub-division in 1909. Till 1904 Bālurghāt formed part of the Sadar Sub-division under the direct control of the Collector. In that year it was formed into a separate Sub-division under a Deputy Collector of the Provincial Service. As elsewhere in the district, the Muhammadans amongst the indigenous population are slightly in excess of the Hindus. The Sub-division is remarkable for containing the bulk of the Sāntāl and Çhotā Nāgpur settlers who, as has been explained elsewhere, show a decided preference for the Bārind tracts, which are a marked feature of the southern portion of Bālurghāt.

Churaman.—A big village on the Mahānanda on the south-western border of the district, in the jurisdiction of the Itāhār out-post. It is 43 miles by road from Dinājpur and 14 mile from Rāiganj railway station. It is a considerable grain mart, the paddy and other produce grown in the surrounding country being exported in boats down the Mahānanda. The Churāman zamindārs, an old family with considerable estates in the neighbourhood, have their home here, and their family residence, a large *pukkā* building on the river bank, looks very picturesque to one approaching the village from the east. The estate is now under the management of the Court of Wards and a few years ago, as the old house seemed in danger of being cut away by the river, it was decided to build the ward a new house at Durgāpur, a place 7 miles off on the road to Rāiganj. This was recently completed and is a most palatial building with extensive grounds. The ward, who is quite young still, and is being educated to Calcutta, seldom lives there, however. There is an excellent dispensary maintained by the estate at Churāman, as also a boys' Middle English school and a model girls' school. The population at the last census was 810.

Dinajpur.—Head-quarters town of the Dinājpur district, situated in 25° 38′ N. and 88° 38′ E., on the eastern bank of the Punarbhabā just below its junction with the Dhepā. The town comprises an area of about 4 square miles and its average height above mean sea-level is 112 to 120 feet.

Population.

The population at the last Census was 15,945. There is reason to suppose that in the heyday of the Dinājpur Rāj, the town

was a very much larger and more important place than it is now. Buchanan Hamilton speaks of this decline in size and importance, yet he estimates the number of homesteads in his day at 5,000 and the population as between 25,000 and 30,000. It seems that in 1807 a terrible fire occurred which destroyed the greater portion of the town proper, and that it has never recovered from this visitation. Nevertheless, the Revenue Surveyor, Major Sherwill, estimates the population in about the year 1860 at 40,000. If this estimate were to be accepted, no explanation is forthcoming of the enormous decrease in population in recent times. I doubt if the estimates of either of these old authorities are to be relied on, but we may accept the fact that the population of the present day is very much less than it was 100 to 150 years ago.

The town. Buchanan Hamilton in describing Dinājpur said it might be divided into four portions, *viz.*, Dinājpur proper, Rājganj, Kānchanghāt and Pāhārpur. For purposes of description this division may be retained, a new quarter, Pulhāt, which has recently been included in the Municipality, being added. Dinājpur proper is the north-eastern quarter of the town where the Mahārājā Bāhādur of Dinājpur has his residence. This quarter, as being originally the seat of Government, has given its name to the town and district. The name itself is probably derived from some former prince Dināj or Dinwāj who had his palace there, but if such a prince existed his memory has been lost. Rājganj is the central portion of the town containing shops, merchants' godowns, markets, etc.; Kānchanghāt is the western portion of the town close to the river. It appears to have been formerly a business quarter, but is nowadays mostly occupied by the houses and gardens of well-to-do persons. Pāhārpur is the southern portion of the town containing the jail, the hospital, the railway station, the courts, and the residences of the officers of Government. Pulhāt is a village on the extreme south and contains all the principal rice *golās*. A small bi-weekly market is held here. The old names I have given for the various quarters of the town have been largely superseded by more recent names applying to smaller areas. Rājganj, for instance, is split up into Munshipārā, Nimtoli, Ganeshtolā, Kāyāhpatti, Basaniāpatti and Kshatripārā. To the west along the river bank we get Sāstitolā, Bāluādangā, Ghāsipārā and Chawlāpatti; to the north are situated Rāmnagar, Kālitolā, and Barabandar; and on the east is the large quarter of Bālubāri. The local gentry have their homes in Sāstitolā, Ghāsipārā, Kālitolā, Barabandar, and Bālubāri on the outskirts of the town. North of the railway line, the town differs little from any other Eastern Bengal bāzār. The houses and shops are built either of brick or mud, some of them with corrugated iron roofs, and have no distinctive features. The houses of the gentry are of the usual Bengal *bāri* type, *i.e.*, the dwelling house is a brick structure surrounded by huts of various shapes and sizes and the whole is generally enclosed by a brick or mud

wall. Sometimes a small garden with mango and jack trees is included in the homestead. The roads are, on the whole, well kept, being repaired by convict labour, as they were 100 years ago. There are three markets in the town, *viz.*, the Gudri or daily bāzār in the centre of the town; the Railbāzār Hāt in Barabandar (so-called because at one time it was enclosed with wooden rails), the principal market, held twice a week, on Sundays and Thursdays; and Pulhāt, a small market, held every Monday and Friday.

South of the railway line the appearance of the station changes greatly, and it can fairly claim to be considered one of the prettiest in Eastern Bengal. The country is high and open and the fine *māidān*, nearly two miles in circumference, dotted here and there with handsome trees, gives it a park-like appearance. On the east and west the *māidān* is bordered by fine avenues of mango and other trees while to the south of it runs the channel of the Ghāgrā. On the east immediately south of the railway line lie the Judge's and Magistrate's Courts and the other Government offices, and the Judge's bungalow. To the east of these are the Reserve Police lines with a spacious parade ground in front of them to the south. On the opposite side of the *māidān* are the new Circuit house and the Civil Surgeon's and Police Superintendent's bungalows. The Collector's house, a fine old brick structure built in the thirties, lies some distance outside the Municipality to the south-west close to the river bank, and from the flat roof of this building a beautiful view of the river and of the distant Himalayas is to be obtained. At certain times of the year Kinchinjungā and other snow peaks may be seen. The soil of this part of the station is almost pure sand deposited at one time or another by the river, and the rank vegetation with which so many Bengal civil stations are cursed is conspicuous by its absence. Several fine specimens of the Indian fig are to be seen in this part of the town, the finest of all, a magnificent banyan, in the Collector's compound. There were formerly at one time or another several buildings on the *māidān* itself. Of these the only survivors are the European Club, a squat brick building erected early in the last century by a former Judge, Mr. Grant, and the old Fouzdāri Record Room, which must be nearly 100 years old. The former building has recently been repaired by the Mahārājā Bāhādur, at his own cost, as a compliment to the members of the Club. The northern portion of the *māidān* is the property of Government. Of the remainder, about one half is rented by Government from the Mahārājā of Dinājpur at a fixed rent in perpetuity, while the other half, mostly land at a lower level subject to occasional inundation from the Ghāgrā, as well as the lands lying to the east and west along the north bank of this stream, are unoccupied waste lands belonging to the same landlord and are commonly used for grazing. On the west of the *māidān* behind the Civil Surgeon's and Police Superintendent's bungalows is a large tank, called the Zulum-Sagar from its having been excavated by a

former Collector with jail labour. This, in course of time, had become overgrown with weeds and partly silted up and was a famous breeding ground for mosquitoes. In 1909-10, a very dry year, the greater portion of the tank having become dry, it was cleaned out and deepened and is now a fine sheet of water. One of the prettiest parts of Dinājpur is the fine mango avenue bordering the last two miles of the Murshidābād road as it approaches Pulhāt from the south. This forms a pleasant ride even in the hottest weather while another 1½ miles along a more or less open road brings one to the Rāmsāgar, the most picturesque tank in the district. In the days when Dinājpur was more important than it is now and many European officers were stationed there, the Mahārājā maintained a comfortable rest-house at this spot, and it was a favourite week-end resort.

Buildings.

There are few buildings of any great beauty or interest in Dinājpur. The Mahārājā Bāhādur's residence is a collection of brick buildings of various periods, partly in the European and partly in the Hindu style, surrounded by a high brick wall. It contains various family temples and has a dispensary attached to it, at which the poor people of the vicinity are treated free. Two parallel canals or moats, called Rāmdāurā, run from the precincts of the palace for some distance in a southerly direction where they join. These were at one time deep and full of water and were used for ceremonial processions and boat races. They may still be seen from the railway line, but are partially silted up and full of weeds and jungle. Opposite the main entrance is a large rose garden. The bungalows of the Judge and Collector are flat-roofed brick buildings of the old Anglo-Indian type. Though comfortable enough, they can hardly be called beautiful. The houses of the other European officers are quite modern and do not merit description. There is a large two-storied new Circuit house, spacious and comfortable, with a pretty view of the *māidān*. The courts of the Judge and Magistrate are brick buildings of the usual type, so also is the High English school. The hospital-dispensary has recently been enlarged and improved and is now quite a model of its kind. It has a commodious female hospital attached to it, which unfortunately is not much appreciated, though a lady doctor is employed to treat female patients. Behind the High school is a large new hostel for Muhammadan boys. This is a red brick building built in quadrangular shape containing a reading room, library, quarters and cook-houses for the boys, and family quarters for the master in charge. The railway station is of no great size or importance, and the buildings connected with it are neither elegant nor imposing. There are few buildings of any archæological interest in the town or its neighbourhood. In Kālitolā, close to the present thānā building, is a temple of Kāli of some antiquity called the Mashan Kāli temple. The Court of Justice of the Dinājpur Rāj used to be held in a building close by, and condemned criminals were executed before the

image. The present keeper of the temple is of the Hāri caste, and is the Government executioner. In Ganeshtolā is a temple of Ganesh with an idol of great antiquity brought from Bānnagar, the city of Bān Rājā, the mythical prince round whom so many of the local traditions centre.

Institutions.

There are few institutions of any sort in Dinājpur. The European Club, which has its club house on the *māidān*, is a small affair with only about half a dozen members. So far as can be ascertained it must be at least 100 years old, but it has no records and it is impossible to say exactly when it was first started. A club and library known as the Dinājpur Institute has recently been started by the Indian gentry of the town and has a good many members. The Indian Government officials and the Police officers have small clubs of their own. There is a prosperous football club in the town to which many of the young men belong. It includes Government clerks and police officers besides a considerable non-official element, and matches are arranged from time to time with teams from other districts. A portion of the *māidān* has been levelled at the expense of the club and is reserved as a football ground. No newspaper is published in Dinājpur at present.

Climate and drainage.

The climate and drainage of Dinājpur town have been treated of, at some length, in the chapter on Public Health, but it may not perhaps be out of place to give a brief résumée of the subject here. The soil in the northern and central portion of the town is a stiff ash-coloured clay, and is used by the inhabitants for making plinths and house walls. The result as regards health has been disastrous. The whole surface of the soil is now a series of holes and excavations dug without method or system and filled with dirty water, weeds, and jungle. In addition to this the two so-called streams, the Kachāi and Ghāgrā, flow into the town from the north and meet on the eastern edge of the bāzār. These two streams, which are practically dry for some six months of the year, receive most of the sewage of the town and are filthy to a degree. With such conditions it is not surprising that malaria should be very prevalent. In 1851 an attempt was made to drain the pools and depressions in the western part of the town, and a channel was cut leading by way of the Ghāgrā stream into the Punarbhabā, which was called Scott's Canal after Mr. Scott, the then Collector. In 1878 a committee consisting of the Sanitary Commissioner of Bengal, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Municipality, the Executive Engineer and the Civil Surgeons of Dinājpur and Rangpur, was constituted to enquire into the reason for the unhealthiness of the town and submit a scheme for sanitary improvement. This committee came to the conclusion that the cause of unhealthiness was defective drainage. In the rains the flood level of the Punarbhabā rose above that of the Ghāgrā, the stream of the latter was checked, and its water, contaminated with sewage,

overflowed its banks and ran into the town. To obviate the nuisance the following works were undertaken :—

(1) An embankment was constructed along the bank of the Punarbhabā.

(2) The mouth of the Ghāgrā, which formerly flowed into the Punarbhabā a little to the north of the Collector's bungalow, was blocked up, and a canal connecting the Ghāgrā and Scott's Canals with the Punarbhabā at Ghughudangā, 6 miles below the town, was constructed. These works were found to be only partially successful in improving the drainage of the town, and in 1887 another canal known as the Thomson Canal was cut at the cost of the Mahārāja, and the beds of the Kachāi and Ghāgrā were properly levelled and dressed. During the course of the last 20 years the beds of these streams have again become a chain of filthy pools, and various schemes have been put forward for improving them so as to ensure a ready flow of water to carry off the drainage. An elaborate scheme for making a portion of these channels *pakkā* has recently been prepared by the Sanitary Engineer, Eastern Bengal and Assam, and is still under the consideration of Government. Meantime an anti-malaria campaign, in charge of a special Assistant Surgeon and under the general supervision of the Civil Surgeon, has been started in the town at Government expense. The object of the campaign is to clear jungle, clean compounds, fill up small ditches and hollows, treat pools and tanks with raw kerosene to destroy mosquito larvæ, and distribute quinine gratis. A considerable staff of coolies and others is maintained for this purpose, and the work that is being done should in time prove beneficial to the health, not to speak of the comfort, of the inhabitants.

Water-supply. Drinking water is obtained entirely from wells. Every well-to-do person has a well, generally a *katcha* one, in his own compound, and besides these there are several large masonry wells for the use of the public within the Municipality. There is a large Government masonry well on the *māidān* near the old Record Room and another in the compound of the Magistrate's Kachahri behind the Court house. All the existing wells are percolation wells and none of them are of any great depth. The supply of water is in consequence liable to run short during the dry season. A trial boring has been made on the *māidān*, to ascertain if the strata will permit of the sinking of wells on the improved system by which a pipe is sunk below the bottom of the well to such a depth as will secure a constant supply of water. It is expected that the construction of some wells of this kind will shortly be begun.

Lighting. The lighting of the town is very imperfect. Kerosene lamps are placed at intervals along the roads within the Municipality, but these are mostly too far apart to be of much use, and on windy nights they are apt to be extinguished.

inajpur Sub-division.—Head-quarters Sub-division of the district, situated between 25° 14′ and 25° 50′ N. and between 88° 5′ and 89° 27′ E., with an area of 1,598 square miles. The Sub-division, which is irregular in shape, comprises the central portion of the district and extends from Rāiganj on the west to Ghorāghāt on the southeast. All the principal rivers of the district run through it in a southerly direction. For administrative purposes the Sub-division is divided into six police circles, *viz.*, Rāiganj, Bansihāri, Kāliyāganj, Kotwāli, Pārbatipur, and Nawābganj, and three independent police out-posts, namely, Itāhār, Chirirbandar, and Ghorāghāt. It contains 3,220 villages and one town, Dinājpur, the head-quarters of the district. The population at the census of 1911 was 694,954, as compared with 637,364 in 1901, and the density 435 persons to the square mile, as compared with 380 and 466 persons to the square mile in the Bālurghāt and Thākurgāon Sub-divisions respectively.

Gangarampur.—Village in the Bālurghāt Sub-division on the bank of the Punarbhabā river. It is situated on a main road 18 miles south-west from Dinājpur town and is the head-quarters of a police circle 262 square miles in extent. A charitable dispensary has recently been opened there. There are several interesting places in the neighbourhood. Within a mile of the village there is a splendid old tank, called Dhaldighi, dating from Muhammadan times, where the third largest cattle fair in the district is held. This fair is a very old one, but of recent years its importance has declined, owing to the competition of other fairs which have come into existence in the vicinity. In Muhammadan times Gangārāmpur was called Damdamā and was a frontier military post. The commander of the troops, called the Wāzir, is said to have lived on the banks of the Dhaldighi tank, which was probably excavated by the Muhammadans, as its shape seems to indicate. In later times under British rule Damdamā was the seat of a Munsif as well as of a Dārogā. A little above Gangārāmpur on the east bank of the Punarbhabā are the extensive ruins of Bānnagar, the city of Bān Rājā, a mythical Hindu monarch, a devotee of Shivā, who fought with Krishnā, and is said to have been ultimately overthrown by an infidel race from the west, possibly identical with Alexander's Greeks. The site of this ancient city appears to have originally contained the remains of many stone temples and other buildings of massive architecture, but for centuries now the ruins have served as a quarry for builders all over the district, and four pillars of coarse granite and a slab or two of sandstone, which form part of a ruined mosque but clearly have a much earlier origin, are all that is left of its ancient grandeur. Other portions of the mosque are of brick and indeed the whole site of the city is so thickly strewn with bricks that it is clear that a great number of brick buildings must have stood there at one time. I think it probable that most of these bricks date merely from Muhammadan times, and are

the remains of the lines in which the troops were quartered. Tradition attributes the Tapandighi, a fine tank more nearly resembling a lake, which is situated a few miles south of Gangārāmpur, to Bān Rājā, and near it are many remains connected with his name. Another interesting old tank situated in the Gangārāmpur jurisdiction is the Kāldighi lying a little to the east of Dhaldighi. This tank is attributed to Kālā Rāni, queen of Bān Rājā. Two miles south of Gangārāmpur is Nāyābāzār, a large grain mart on the banks of the Punarbhabā, from which a considerable export of paddy is carried on by river.

Gareya.—This, though a small village with only 591 inhabitants, is a big market and jute centre. It is situated 8 miles east of Thākurgāon, on the road from that place to Nilphāmāri. Three zamindārs have their *kachhahris* there, and there are several jute godowns aud Mārwāri shops in the village. During the jute season 1,500 to 2,000 cart-loads of jute are sold every *hāt* day. The place is absolutely devoid of attraction, the country round about being flat and ugly and without anything in the way of antiquities to relieve the monotony. A good deal of jute is grown in the vicinity.

Ghoraghat.—A village in the Sadar Sub-division, in the south-eastern corner of the district, 18 miles east of the railway station of Hilli in Bogrā. It is the head-quarters of a police outpost 70 square miles in extent, and is situated on the bank of the Karatoyā river. A considerable trade in grain is carried on there. Ghorāghāt was an important place in ancient times. Buchanan Hamilton says of it, "Ghoraghat is the place where Virat Raja kept his horses, from which circumstance its name is derived. In the time of Nazrat Khan, king of Gaur, it belonged to a certain Nilambar Raja, who resided at Kantedwar in the Rangpur district, and had at it a fort surrounded by a forest. In the conquest of this infidel, Nazrat employed Ismail Ghazi, a very holy man, as well as a good officer. He reduced all the neighbouring country, and took up his residence in the fort of Ghoraghat, which had formerly been constructed by the Hindus, and changed the name of the place into Nazratabad, after his master's title. He then cleared the adjacent woods, and a city arose, which was much increased by the addition of Arangabad to the north and Narangabad to the south. The principal increase seems to have been owing to the military station (Fauzdari) of the north-east frontier having been withdrawn from Rangamati, after the unsuccessful attempt on Assam, and to the army having been stationed at Ghoraghat, for the Governor of the place in all late records is said to have been called Fauzdar of Rangamati. The person who brought the troops from Rangamati to Ghoraghat is said to have been called Mahammad and he was succeeded in his government by his son Zaynulabdin. Now from an inscription over a mosque, near the ruins of the Governor's house, it appears that Zaynulabdin, the

son of Mahammad Hoseyn, son of Mahammad Saleh Izdanah, was Governor A.H. 1153. This mosque is now deserted, no worship having been performed in it for 40 years, and it never has been large. The Governor's house near this mosque is quite ruinous, although the gateway is pretty entire, and many walls are standing. These show that the size has been considerable; but no traces remain either of elegance or splendour. The city in the time of its greatness extended 8 or 10 miles in length, and about two in width, and bricks and ruins may be traced in different parts through that extent; but there is no reason to suppose that it was a close built town of these dimensions. On the contrary, there is every appearance of by far the greater part having been cultivated fields with houses and gardens scattered among them. Besides the mosque already mentioned there were several others but all of very small dimensions, nor are there any traces of any great public buildings. The place suffered no particular misfortune, and has gone to decay merely owing to the removal of the courts of justice and of the army. The fort seems to have always been a sorry place, and the only remains are a ditch, surrounding a space on the bank of the river, about a mile in length, and half a mile in width. Part has been carried away by the river. The most celebrated place in the town is the tomb of Ismael Ghazi, placed on the south-east corner of the fort. He is much respected and feared both by the Hindus and Muhammadans, and a small canopy is still hung over his tomb which is very ruinous." Several zamindārs, of whom the most important are the Mahārājā of Cooch Bihār and the Kumār of Bardhan Kuthi, who belongs to a branch of the Dinājpur Rāj family, own land in the vicinity and have *kachhahris* in the village.

Haripur.—A village in the Thākurgāon Sub-division, on the Purneā border, 37 miles north-west of Dinājpur and close to the main road to Purneā. It has a population of 724 inhabitants, and is important as being the home of several zamindārs, all more or less related to each other, who own all the land in the neighbourhood. One of the smaller annual cattle fairs is held here, and there is also a large weekly market, a charitable dispensary and a Middle English school. The estate of one of the leading zamindārs was for several years under the management of the Court of Wards and has only recently been released.

Joyganj.—A big village of 2,355 inhabitants in the Thākurgāon Sub-division. It is situated on the Thākurgāon-Nilphāmāri road, 19 miles east of Thākurgāon, on the east bank of the Ātrāi. It used to be an important centre of jute and other trade, but its importance in this respect has declined in recent years. The zamindārs of Teotā, who have large estates in Dāccā, own land in the vicinity and have a *kachhahri* in the village. Some years ago these zamindārs started a co-operative grain bank called a *dharma golā* in the village. This institution has become very

popular amongst the cultivators. The principle on which it is worked is that every member, besides paying an annual subscription of 8 annas for the privilege of membership, deposits in the bank as much paddy as he can spare from his year's crop. This is utilised for distribution amongst the members either for seed, or in years of scarcity for food, every borrower repaying the bank 1½ maunds for every maund borrowed, after harvesting his crop. The zamindār's contribution to the scheme was a present of a fine corrugated iron godown for storing the grain. The scheme has worked so well that several smaller *golās* have been started in neighbouring villages on the estates of these zamindārs. A small cattle fair is held at Joyganj every year in the month of March.

Kantanagar.—A small village on the Dinājpur-Thākurgāon road, 12 miles north of Dinājpur, on the banks of the Dhepā. The chief point of interest about the place is a large Hindu temple which Buchanan Hamilton described as by far the finest he had seen in Bengal. It is situated in the ruins of a fort, which is said to have belonged to Virāt Rājā. The building was begun in 1704 by Rājā Prānnāth, the greatest of the Dinājpur Rājās, who brought an image of Kāntāji (Vishnu) from Delhi and set it up there. The temple, originally on a small scale, was extended as the building went on and took a long time in completion. For want of attention it soon fell into disrepair and Mr. Hatch, one of the early Collectors of the district, had it thoroughly restored less than 100 years after it was first begun. It again became almost a ruin by earthquake in 1897, and the present Mahārājā, partly at the instance of Government, which thought it a pity that such a fine specimen of Hindu architecture should be lost, is spending considerable sums in restoring it. The building, a square two-storied brick structure, rests upon a massive plinth of sandstone blocks, brought from the ruins of the ancient city of Bānnagar near Gangārāmpur. Some people say, indeed, that the idols of Krishnā and Rādhā worshipped in the temple, come from the same place. The whole outside of the temple is covered with beautiful brick reliefs, the work of Krishnagar artists, representing every phase of Indian life. The roof was formerly adorned with turrets or cupolas, which, however, were all destroyed in the 1897 earthquake. The temple is well worth a visit from anyone interested in antiquities. An annual religious fair is held at Kāntānagar on the occasion of the Rāsh-Jātrā, to which many pilgrims resort. The Kāntānagar temple, though beautiful and interesting is, of course, quite a modern affair, but the old fort in which the temple stands is of great antiquity and would be of surpassing interest to the antiquarian if only there were something besides mere tradition to go by in determining the date and history of the ruins. It is said to be one of the places where Virāt Rājā, a very ancient and apparently powerful monarch, kept his herds of cattle. The space covered by the fort is about a mile square and is surrounded and intersected by high ramparts

now overgrown with jungle. Within the fortifications are several large mounds possibly the remains of ancient buildings, but all the ruins seem to be of earth, and no bricks or stones are to be found from which any information might be gained.

Khansama.—A village of 1,798 inhabitants in the Thākurgāon Sub-division. It lies nine miles west of Darwāni railway station in the Rangpur district, and 23 miles north-east of Dinājpur on the east bank of the Ātrāi. It is the head-quarters of an independent police out-post, 80 square miles in area, is a big centre of the jute trade, and has a large weekly market.

Lahirihat.—A considerable village in the Thākurgāon Sub-division, 14 miles west of Thākurgāon, and 48 miles north-west of Dinājpur. It contains a registration office and one of the three Guru Training schools in the district. It is a large centre for jute, and exports not only raw jute but hand-made gunny cloth. There is a large weekly market here.

Mahipal-dighi.—This is a large tank by the side of the *Māldā* road about 18 miles south-west of Dinājpur in the Bansihāri thānā. It is thus described by Buchanan Hamilton:—"In the north-east part of this division is a very large tank, supposed to have been dug by Mohipal Raja, and called after his name. The sheet of water extends 3,800 feet from north to south, and 1,100 feet from east to west. Its depth must be very considerable, as the banks are very large. On the banks are several small places of worship, both Hindu and Moslem, but none of any consequence; nothing remains to show that Mohipal ever resided either at the tank, or at Mohipur, near it; but there is a vast number of bricks, and some stones, that probably belonged to religious buildings, that have been erected by the person who constructed the tank. One of the stones is evidently the lintel of a door, and of the same style as those at Bannagar, and may have been brought from the ruins of that city. The people in the neighbourhood have an idea that there has been a building in the centre of the tank; but this is probably devoid of truth, as there is no end to the idle stories which they relate concerning the tank and Mohipal. Both are considered as venerable or rather awful, and the Raja is frequently invoked in times of danger." In 1793 a branch factory of a larger indigo concern in Māldā was erected at Mahipāl-dighi by a Mr. Thomas, who combined the functions of indigo planter and Baptist Missionary. The remains of the old indigo vats are still to be seen on the north bank of the tank. It does not appear that the factory was ever very large or prosperous, or that Mr. Thomas had any great success with his mission work in that neighbourhood. It is said that Mr. Thomas utilised some of the old bricks and stones, spoken of by Buchanan Hamilton, in erecting his factory buildings. The tank with its lofty embankments covered with well grown trees, and its great expanse of water fringed with tall feathery-topped reeds, is one of the most beautiful spots in the district, and something of grandeur and

mystery still clings to it. A remarkable thing about this tank is that fish of the carp family caught in it are so tough and oily as to be quite uneatable. The flesh indeed is said to resemble rubber in consistency. I can offer no explanation of this phenomenon.

Nawabganj.—A village in the Sadar Sub-division, situated seven miles east of the Charkāi railway station on the old channel of the Karatoyā, which is now little more than a string of *bils* or marshes. It is the centre of a police circle of 168 square miles and used in former days to be the head-quarters of a Munsif also. There are some places of antiquarian interest in the vicinity, notably Sitākot or Sitākunda, a square mound of bricks surrounding a cavity which may have been a small tank. The goddess Sitā is said to have lived here during her banishment from Rām. A short distance away on the banks of the Karatoyā is a place called Tarpanghāt, where the poet and saint Vālmiki used to bathe, and which, owing to its sacred character, is still resorted to twice a year by the Hindus of the locality for the same purpose. Five or six miles from Nawābganj thānā, in a patch of tree jungle, is the ruin of a dwelling of some sort. It is of no very great extent, and is surrounded by a high mud wall and contains several mounds which may be the remains of small buildings. It is called Bān Rājā's house, but if Bān Rājā was the great prince he is said to have been, it is more likely that some servants of his, possibly cow-herds, lived there, than that he lived there himself. The history of the spot is lost in the mists of tradition and it is impossible to estimate the real age of the ruins.

Nekmarad.—A small village of 474 inhabitants in the Thākurgāon Sub-division, 16 miles south-west of Thākurgāon, and 37 miles north-west of Dinājpur. The village is of no importance in itself, but is nevertheless worthy of mention as the place where the biggest cattle fair in East Bengal is held every April. The description already given of the Ālwākhoā fair applies to this also, except that rather fewer elephants, camels, and fat-tailed sheep, and a larger number of cattle are sold. There are several proprietors of the fair, of whom the principal are the Māldwār and Haripur zamindārs, and these divide the profits of the fair between them. The usual commission charged is 8 annas to Re. 1 per every head of cattle sold according to the value. In recent times the fair was closed by order of the Magistrate as it was feared that, attracting as it did large numbers of up-country men, it might bring plague into the district. It remained closed till 1907, when the permission of Government was obtained to its reopening. Since then it has been regularly held and is beginning to regain some of its former importance.

The place derives its name from the Muhammadan *pir*, or saint, Nekmardan, whose remains are preserved in a thatched hut near the site of the fair, which is held in his honour. He appears to have been a very holy man, but little is known about him, and it is impossible to say the exact period at which he lived.

Nithpur.—A village of 2,925 inhabitants in the Bālurghāt Sub-division, situated on the east bank of the Punarbhabā in the extreme south-western corner of the district. It is distant 49 miles almost due south from Dinājpur, and is 16 miles from Muchiā railway station on the Katihār-Godāgāri line. It is identical with Porshā, the centre of the thānā of that name, which has an area of 202 square miles. A charitable dispensary has recently been opened here close to the thānā. Nithpur is the most important grain mart in the district and large quantities of paddy and rice are exported by river to Godāgāri and other marts outside the district. Imports of pulses and other food-stuffs, not commonly produced in the district, are also considerable. The population of the village itself mostly consists of up-country merchants and up-country coolies employed by them. The Porshā zamindārs, the largest Muhammadan land-owners in the district, have a *kachhahri* in the village. Nithpur is surrounded on the north, west, and south by low-lying country covered with grass jungle, through which the Punarbhabā river winds its tortuous way. Besides the actual channel through which the river now flows the country is intersected by old river-beds and sprinkled with many *bils*. A few years ago this tract of low marshy country was full of game of all sorts, but now beyond a stray leopard and a few duck and partridge there is little to attract the sportsman. Considerable herds of cattle and buffaloes are grazed here in the dry season, and Santāl and other settlers have already done much towards bringing the higher land under cultivation. This is one of the few parts of the district where *boro* rice is grown to any extent.

Parbatipur.—A large village in the Sadar Sub-division, 19 miles east of Dinājpur, with a population, mostly foreign, of 1,914 souls. It is an important junction on the Eastern Bengal State Railway, and an appreciable part of its population consists of railway servants, railway coolies, and others more or less connected with the railway. The Station Master and the Assistant Station Master are Europeans, and it boasts a railway hospital and a railway police thānā. Pārbatipur is a police circle of 166 square miles and the thānā head-quarters is about a mile from the railway station. A large weekly market is held here. Pārbatipur is on the old main road to Rangpur and is said to have been a frontier post of the ancient kingdom of Virāt Rājā. There are many remains in the neighbourhood which are ascribed to this monarch. The most important of these are the ruins of a fort and city where Kichak, brother-in-law of Virāt, is believed to have lived. The fort is about half a mile square and surrounded by a rampart and a ditch now overgrown with trees and scrub jungle. At a place not very far from the present thānā, in a hole under a big tree, are to be seen a plough and other instruments of agriculture in stone which are ascribed to Bhim Rājā, the mighty hero of the Solar race, who was a contemporary and

friend of Virāt's and was hospitably received by that prince when he and his brothers were expelled from their ancestral kingdom.

Phulbari.—A village in the Bālurghāt Sub-division 26 miles south-east of Dinājpur with a population of 555. It is the centre of a thānā of 160 square miles and is also a railway station on the main line between Sārā and Siliguri. It contains a Sub-registry office and a charitable dispensary and was, till recently, the seat of a Munsif. A large weekly market is held in the town, and a good deal of paddy is exported. Most of the exports are carried by rail, but in the rainy season a certain amount of trade is carried by the Jamunā river which flows through the village.

Raiganj.—A village in the Sadar Sub-division 32 miles west of Dinājpur. It is the centre of a police circle of 243 square miles and is also a railway station. It boasts a Munsif's *kachhahri*, a registration office and a charitable dispensary. Rāiganj is, next to Dinājpur, the largest and most important centre in the district. The population at the last census was returned as 4,431. The greater part of the village and the surrounding country is owned by the Mahārājā of Dinājpur, who has a large *kachhahri* there, and who maintains the charitable dispensary. He derives a considerable profit from the market, in which fish is an important commodity. The Churāman zamindārs also have valuable property in the village. A considerable trade is carried on in jute and oil-seeds, and, besides many jute godowns belonging to native merchants, the large Greek firm of Ralli Brothers have a jute press near the railway station in which about 100 coolies are employed daily during the jute season. The river Kulik runs through the town, and there is a brisk trade by boat during the rains. The only Co-operative Credit Society in the district has its head-quarters here, though it has hitherto failed to prosper as well as might have been expected.

Ramganj.—A place close to Rānisankail village in the thānā of that name, on the opposite bank of the Kulik river. It is of interest as being the place of residence of the Māldwār zamindārs, an old Brahmin zamindāri family from Darbhanga. They are the only Maithili Brahmin zamindārs in the district and have considerable estates both in Dinājpur and Purneā. They live in a large brick house of quite recent date, close to which is a charitable dispensary maintained by them, which is better attended than any other dispensary in the district.

Sapahar.—A village in the Bālurghāt Sub-division 14 miles south-west of Bālurghāt. There is a big weekly market, and one of the smaller annual cattle fairs is held here. The population consists principally of Behāri settlers and other foreigners, and the village has more the appearance of an up-country village than of a Bengal one, the houses being built mostly of mud after the Behār style. The surrounding country is undulating *Bārind*, and good qualities of winter paddy are grown in the *hulās*. Much of

this paddy is exported by cart to Bālurghāt, Nithpur, and elsewhere. About two miles from the village is an old tank, said to have been dug by a certain Dhibar Rājā about 1,000 years ago. In its centre is an eight-sided stone pillar some 34 feet in height and 10 feet in diameter. There are some traces of iron ornaments on its top but it has no carving or inscription, so it is impossible to ascertain the object with which it was erected.

Samjhia.—Village in the Sadar Sub-division of 730 inhabitants, situated on the Ātrāi 14 miles south-east of Dinājpur. It is the site of a large market and is an important centre of the rice trade. There is a considerable export of paddy by river from the place.

Thakurgaon.—Head-quarters village of the Sub-division of the same name, situated in 26° 5′ N. and 88° 26′ E., on the east bank of the Tāngan. It is 35 miles by road from the district head-quarters and 26 miles from Nilphāmāri railway station. The town is an ordinary Bengali village of 1,422 inhabitants, and is not important except as being the head-quarters of the Sub-division. It contains the Sub-divisional offices, civil and criminal courts, a registration office, and a police station. By far the finest building in the town is the new High school, a handsome brick building, built by private subscriptions, with hostels for Hindu and Muhammadan boys attached to it. The necessary subscriptions were raised and the building erected largely through the instrumentality of an energetic Sub-divisional Officer who was stationed there for some years. The town possesses a good hospital maintained by the District Board. There is an old temple of Govinda (Vishnu) at Govindnagar on the other bank of the Tāngan opposite the town, close to which a small annual fair is held. Govindnagar was formerly the favourite country seat of the famous Rājā Rāmnāth, and the ruins of his house are still to be seen there overgrown with jungle. On the west bank of the Tāngan opposite Thākurgāon is a patch of tree jungle some two miles long by half a mile wide. This, in places, is so thick as to be almost impenetrable, and is said to afford a refuge for several leopards and panthers.

Thakurgaon Sub-division.—Northern Sub-division of the district, lying between 25° 40′ and 26° 23′ N., and 88° 2′ and 88° 39′ E., with an area of 1,171 square miles. The population in 1911 was 545,566, or 466 persons to the square mile. The density of population is considerably greater than in most other parts of the district, the population to the square mile in Thākurgāon thānā being nearly equal to that in the Kotwāli thānā itself. The number of villages in the Sub-division is 1,990. It is divided for administrative purposes into four police circles, *viz.*, Thākurgāon, Rānisankail, Pirganj, and Birganj, and three independent out-posts, Ātwāri, Bāliyādangi and Khānsāmā. The chief town or village is Thākurgāon on the Tāngan. Being further to the north the climate of the Sub-division is cooler than that of

the other Sub-divisions of the district and the country generally is more thickly wooded. In the thānās of Thākurgāon and Rānisankail Muhammadans are in excess of Hindus; in the other thānās Hindus preponderate. There are few Sāntāls or other foreigners in this Sub-division.

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